

**DO NOT
DIE
IN THEIR WAR**

**(A treatise on Nigeria's contemporary
Political trajectories)**

'Dele Farotimi



**Do not
Die
in their
War...**

'Dele Farotimi



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to the Almighty God who gave me the burden to speak, and wouldn't let me be, until I had fulfilled my purpose in Him.

I have been blessed to be loved by Iya Olu, I dedicate this book to her memory. To the woman who taught me how to be a man, Iya Wale, and to Olufunmilola, the one that loves me in spite of me. Thank you for your love.

My Credo

*Not much to pack in truth
It's either one way, or it be the other
Restrained by fetters
Or to the hearth returned
My choice must not be tolerated*

*If to the gaols my path directs
If by a file, I shall be defined
My luggage is spare
My conscience even sparser
The gaoler's keep, a place of rest*

*If to the hearth, I be returned
Another victim of the land that devours Just remember
the truths I have told Allow the blood a cure for
blindness
That has held down the children of Ham*

*When these generations are gone
When the legends are spun, of this shore
Only the truth shall endure, lies exposed
In dying for truth is immortality assured To live for
truth elevates a people*

'Dele Farotimi

February 2019



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My true blessings are the women God had positioned in my life from the beginning of my sojourn. My late grandmother who raised me, my mother who fathered me, and my darling wife, who loves me in spite of me, and tolerates my many excesses and idiosyncrasies. Thank you all for the love.

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The midwives who ensured that this book was written, Femi, the quintessential neighbour; Jahman, my tireless and long suffering editor; Liz Jay who encouraged me when I flagged; Omalicha, who helped clarify my thoughts, and my children for whom I write that they might know that I wasn't amongst those that stole the future.

I have been blessed to sit under the ministrations of a man through whom God has spoken to me several times to clarify my thoughts, and direct me. Pastor Paul, I thank you for your faithfulness to the truth, and the word of God.

To the unmentioned friends, families, and well-wishers. Thank you for your help, prayers, and encouragement. May God's grace and mercies abide with you all. Amen. _____

Note to Readers:

Most of the materials in this volume have already been exposed on the author's social media platforms, particularly Facebook, where they appeared as free commentaries on events happening around; and shaping the polity. Some of the articles were written at different times before the elections of 2015, and 2019.



CONTENTS

Dedication
Acknowledgments
Contents
Preface
Introduction Prologue
Why Now?
Silence No Longer an Option

Part 1: Section 1: Truth & Polity (I)

Chapter One

Living A Lie

- (I) An Insincere System
- (II) The Burdened System
- (III) A Skewed Nationhood
- (IV) Rule of Violence
- (V) Injustice + Inequality = Conflicts + Insurgencies
- (VI) Crooked System = Bad Leadership
- (VII) The Constitution as a Burden
- (VIII) The Nigerian State and the Rule of Law

Chapter Two

The Burden of Being

- (I) Collapse of Public Institutions
- (II) The Normalisation of Madness
- (III) The Untouchable Thieves
- (IV) A Criminal Justice System
- (V) Dubious Provenance, Questionable Quality
- (VI) Awkward Fight against Corruption
- (VII) A compromised Middle Class



Chapter Three

Self-Immolation

- (I) The Subjectivisation of Truth
- (II) The Weaponisation of Poverty and Ignorance
- (III) Dialogues of Ventriloquists
- (IV) The Thinking Thieves
- (V) Yeye Rolling... Thinking Thieves Vs Unthinking Thieves
- (VI) Mythicising 'The North'

Chapter Four

The Buhari Metaphor

- (I) A Virus Unleashed
- (II) I Love Buhari
- (III) Buhari is not to Blame? Really?
- (IV) Letter to the *Buharideens*

Part 1, Section 2: Citizenship & the Polity Fore-note

Citizenship in Nigeria

Part 11, Section 1: Sundry Other Items; Truth & Polity II

- (I) Corruption of the News
- (II) Idiocy of the Middle Class
- (III) Truth as the Silver Bullet
- (IV) The Stubborn and Unpalatable Truth (V) Power Corrupts...
- (VI) Up to the Oppressed to throw off the Oppressor
- (VII) The Power of Memorials
- (VIII) June 12 and the Aborted Nationhood... (IX) The Arrogance of Foolish Knowledge...

Part 11, Section 2: Sundry Other Items; Characters & Metaphors



(I) Principalities and Powers (II) A
Lost People...

07

(III) The Righteous Few

(IV) The Super Eagles and Nigerian Unity (V)
Obasanjo, the Tortoise, and His In-Laws...

(VI) The Genius, the Liar, and the Teleprompter...

(VII) IITA... Reminder to a Wasteland

(VIII) 'Aremu the Lion Cub'...

(IX) The Thieves and the Maddening Broom...

(X) The Rape of Lekki: A Personal Reflection (X): It's Just A Penny?

(XII) Heroes and the Wasted

Part 11, Section 3: Sundry Other Items; Purgation & Resolve Nigeria,
the Way Forward...

Epilogue

Do Not Die in Their Wars The

Lazy Youth...

Index



PREFACE

Do not Die in their War

There comes a time in the life of a nation when it must have its own soul-searching conversations, examining its peculiarities as an independent entity with a duty to define and defend its identity and take its place among other countries of the world.

Such conversations cannot be left to the whims of the masses. Someone has to take the lead. Someone has to make the call. Someone has to bell the cat. Someone has to be the voice crying in the wilderness, clearing the pathway of the nation to Justice, Equity and Fair Play, which are the foundations of nationhood or statehood.

For this not to be an exercise in futility, it must be a well-articulated exercise, aimed at providing direction to the majority of the people living in a Third World country like Nigeria.

The conversation will also require boldness, social and political street knowledge and, above all, clarity and sincerity of purpose, emanating from the 'deep' of the initiator, which will not rest until it finds a settlement with the 'deep' of the receptor. According to the book that I read, 'the deep calls to the deep.'

This is the onerous task Mr. Dele Farotimi has taken responsibility for at a time when many have been cowed into awkward and resounding silence through the instrumentality of ignorance, poverty and self-preservation. This is a book that is grounded in ideology and strategies on how to build and sustain an egalitarian society with clearly



defined role of the governed and the governing body; looking through the past to evaluate the present and looking through the present to predict the future.

Permit me to however note that this book as rich in analysis and reasoning as it is an appetizer in the pool of knowledge that must be available to us today in the area of nation-building and holding government and its functionaries accountable to the people in the fulfilment of their primary obligations to the people, the welfare and the security of the people, the backbone of the social contract, the departure from the state of nature to the state of civilization. Once again I salute Mr. Dele Farotimi, I urge you to read and become an evangelist and ambassador of the message because bigger than the book is its message of social, political and economic emancipation of the most populous black nation on earth and bigger than the author is the message that must become an independent entity able to find its way into the society and fulfil the purpose for which it is sent. Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

-Taiwo Akinlami



INTRODUCTION

Laugh Through the Tears...

I **STARTED** writing this book sometime back in 2011. Bola Ahmed Tinubu's appropriation of the Lekki-Epe

Expressway was the trigger for the release of the pain that has been the main motivation for my literary exertions. I wrote to protest, I wrote to mobilize, and then I wrote in frustration, as I watched the truncation of conscious attempts by the citizens to protest the injustice.

As I watched the Fuel Subsidy uprisings of December 31, 2011-January 1, 2012, and saw the cooperation and coordination between the Action Congress (AC) government of Lagos State and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) federal government -- both in the timing of the commencement of tolling on the road, just days before the removal of subsidies were announced, and during the process leading up to the issuance of the sovereign guarantees the federal government had issued on behalf of Lagos State -- one that discountenanced the obvious rape of the citizens; I became convinced that the dividing lines between the parties were illusory, and existed only in the well-stocked imagination of the people.

I began to write down my thoughts on the Nigerian State, and to query some old lies and assumptions about the country of my birth, the structures, systems, events, and persons that had shaped her trajectories and decline. By 2014, my "editors", be they friends and family members, or my long-suffering editor, believed the book was ready, but I



demurred. That was where I was, when I wrote the chapter titled “*Do not Die in their War,*” which was given to the press for publication, but which only *The Guardian* found the courage to publish on the 7th of February 2015.

With the unexpected refusal of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to develop a spine, Buhari and the APC came to power, and the full ramifications of the hubristic error of the Nigerian system were evident to me. I began to re-evaluate known facts in the light of the newly emerging realities. The book became my refuge, and I began to examine the subjects of citizenship, and

Nigerian nationality, and structures of political governance.

I have done enough to believe the book sufficiently ready to be inflicted on others, and for both the informed and the rabbles to dissect my thoughts. I enjoy debate, and it is my intention to provoke the same, but I will not consider my job done if I fail to beam my light ahead. It has pleased the Almighty God, by whatever name you call Him, to grant me a prophetic insight into the land of my birth, and you may go and reread “*Do Not Die in Their War*” or argue with yourself. It is time to arm you for what is coming, and the season we are about to enter, but will live through, survive, and thrive in.

Nigeria is heavily pregnant. She is not a she, and nobody's mother, but Nigeria is pregnant, and birth she will. What Nigeria will birth is yet unknown, but when she will birth is



painfully imminent. She is already in the throes of her labour pains.

To be rid of Jonathan in 2015, the Nigeria system in a bid to survive, assembled a coalition of interests, and Obasanjo, IBB, Tinubu, Atiku, Saraki, *et al.* found the grace to work together for the Buhari project. Tinubu required a national platform to divert attention away from the failings of his political franchises in the Southwest, and the somewhat unpleasant fumes of the Buhari illusion were euphoric enough to do the job. Winning the presidency was a non-factored boon, and the lack of influence on Buhari's choice of ministers evidenced this. Each went into the project for his selfish reasons, and has stayed or moved on based on the return on his investments.

As we have come back to where we started out, my counsel is that you just learn to laugh through the tears. There are reasons enough to weep for Nigeria, but the coming weeks and months will offer up some more. The true weight, quality, and very integrity of men shall be tested in the extreme, but I urge you to find, and then retain the grace to smile through the tears.

You will hear men pronounce the wicked innocent, and condemn truth as lies. Subjectivised truths have gained currency in our land, and men look up to their fellow men God in telling the truth. Poison has become the elixir for stomach aches; decapitation is the cure for migraine. Buhari's disregard for the rule of law and burgeoning fascism has become the cure for the fake anti-corruption wars. But in the midst of the tears, be hopeful. Buhari is the one that shall



unwittingly slay the evil system that has held Nigeria bound, but he must not be allowed to erect his own evil system in its place.

The Buhari of 2015 was the creation of the cooperation between the military oligarchs that designed the criminal enterprise called the Federal Republic of Nigeria -- chief of them were Obasanjo, Danjuma, IBB and Abdusallami; the *Jagaban* political machinery; and the civilian partners of the military oligarchs in the PDP, represented by the Saraki N-PDP. This coalition assured that the Buhari brand narrative was sold virtually unchallenged by the orphaned government of GEJ, mostly through the use of Tinubu's immense powers in the Nigerian press. Tinubu's corruptive reaches into the Nigerian judiciary were equally vital, and this was fully deployed in Buhari's service. But this is 2019, and the objective realities have changed.

The generals have left as they had been compelled to do in 1985. Buhari has done his thing again. He does not know how to play the game, not for him the collegiate need for consensus to be built; he must always have his way, and if you're not Hausa-Fulani, you have to queue. Buhari ignores the foundational lies that have been perpetuated, maintained and serviced in order to preserve the unjust state of Nigeria. For the suffocating illusion of a united and indivisible Nigerian State, the myth of a single monolithic northern Nigeria must be maintained.

Buhari has destroyed this illusion irreparably.



Buhari is an ethnic irredentist, and a religious bigot. He does not consciously act out his prejudices, but his reflexes are undeniably jaundiced by his bigotry and ethnicity. These are the impulses that have always guided his choices, and they have also coloured his perspectives and world view.

Buhari abhors corruption and corrupt people; this has been the story since his emergence in national politics and governance in Nigeria, and he does have the protestations and record to back up the claims at least until you looked just a little closer.

Buhari defines corruption much differently from the chorus of his hypnotized followers, and sees the fight against corruption through extremely subjective prisms. You cannot be corrupt when you are his own: and his own are identified through very narrow spectra. If you speak *Fulfulde*, you are blood; if you are Muslim, you are kith; if you are a native speaker of the Hausa or Kanuri languages, you are kin. Every other person queue behind. The order of these ones is also dependent on need and usefulness in a transactional way. And you cannot be corrupt if you are his. "Join the APC and your sins would be forgiven" -- those are the undeniable words of Comrade Adams Oshiomhole (national chairman of Buhari's political party, APC). This is what the reality advertises.

Buhari has lost the support and patronage of the power concentric that facilitated his return to power, and of his original sponsors, only the *Jagaban* remains, and; the stage is set for a battle *royale*. The lies of old have come home to roost, and the definitive battle for the soul of Nigeria is about to be



joined. The war predicted in *“Do not Die in their Wars,”* has commenced in earnest, and it will get much worse before it begins to get better.

The PDP is the APC, and the APC is the PDP. The two are Siamese twins, joined at the hip, and inseparable. There is nothing to choose between them, and the true victims are the hapless citizens caught in their middle. They trade in hope, and offer nothing but despair; the citizens' lots have become progressive only in pain and hard toil; hope has become a scarce commodity in the Promised Land that has been turned into hell, and; it will get worse before it may be turned around.

With the loss of the middle belt and the northern minorities as a consequence of the revelation of Buhari as the ethnic irredentist and religious bigot that he is, and the loss of the support of the traditional power brokers of the military oligarchy, Buhari's path to power does not lie with the people. This is because in the absence of an illusion to market, and the undeniably bad record of governance, Buhari has no choice but to resort to the reflexive position of his true nature. Thus, the real Buhari is again emerging from behind the mask enforced by his earlier need for pretence.

Once upon a time, the Nigerian press was a critical force for good. It queried assumptions and demanded account. You could count on the courage and essential honesty of our pressmen and women. Our media was the envy of Africa, and a veritable bulwark against the forces of tyranny in our



country. But today, as with every other sector of Nigeria, the press is irredeemably lost. In place of truth, our press has become purveyors of falsehood. Truth has become subjective, and coloured, and you needn't read, listen, or watch a news piece for long; it's very easy to tell who has paid for what piece of news. The oppressed have lost the capacity to tell their stories, and when they would dare; the platforms are owned by beneficiaries of the oppressive system, or the oppressors, be that by proxy or in the full glare of the people.

The results of the coming elections have been predetermined! For the pedantic, I point to Ekiti, and I say look to Osun. The Yoruba people were once the bellwethers of progressive politics in Nigeria. Thanks to Awolowo and his crew; the people were armed against the identified threats of feudalism, and religious fundamentalism. The Yoruba political, sociocultural, and economic leadership pursued education and knowledge as an article of faith. They knew that a people intellectually liberated are impossible to enslave. The remotest hamlets were furnished with schools. Knowledge was the building block against feudalistic designs. The foothold gained by the forces of feudalism and religious fundamentalism is a function of the loss of the knowledge industries built by the visions of our fathers. The Yoruba of old would not have fallen preys to the twin evils identifiable in the two charades that I have mentioned above.

The average Yoruba person has become intellectually disengaged from the process of leadership emergence over



the years of relying on first Awolowo, and then the Awoists, to point where to go. The NADECO struggles led to the emergence of a younger crop of Yoruba men and women who were never members of the Awolowo political family; amongst these were the like of Wahab Dosumu, who was an NPN man in the 2nd Republic; Ademola Adeniji-Adele, Bola Tinubu, and a host of others. These men fused to varying degrees with the Awoists in the Afenifere and the Alliance for Democracy, AD. The inherent contradiction of the uneasy marriage is one of the identifiable reasons for the death of the AD, and the intractably irreconcilable crises that have rendered Afenifere irrelevant.

Bola Tinubu is the inheritor of the powers once wielded by first, Awolowo; then the ones branded as Awoists after the sage's demise, and then, Afenifere before the death of Chief Abraham Adesanya and Uncle Bola Ige – who was gruesomely murdered by the Nigeria State. The *Jagaban of Borgu* is the de facto leader of the Yoruba race, and he has been so since he somehow survived the Obasanjo tsunami of 2003. The *Jagaban* has not only survived the *Ebora of Owu*, he has built a political juggernaut that is bred on the steroids of alleged extreme corruption, and an iron grip on the levers of coercive violence and state-backed intimidation of political opponents and dissenting opinions. The *Jagaban* has ably exploited the corruption of the Nigerian press. The closest leader in our history in this corruptive effect is Babangida.

The core Awoists disliked Bola Tinubu with a passion. I began to notice this intense dislike for Tinubu in the days before the death of Uncle Bola, and during the crisis that



rocked Afenifere and the AD. I watched as the dislike morphed into an implacable hatred of the man as he went about methodically dismantling the powers and influence of the Awoists upon the demise of Adesanya and Ige. I was initially baffled by their hatred of the man, but I have come to understand why. The *Jagaban* exercises the same unrestrained powers once held by the sage, and later by them, but nobody could be more unlike Awolowo.

Awolowo was a man far ahead of his time, and most definitely ahead of the current crop of afflictions disguised as leaders. He had an impenetrable moral anchor, and was spartan in his consumptions. Not for Awolowo the sybaritic lifestyle of our new-age sage. Awolowo never owned a private jet, and if he had one, he was sensitive and sensible enough not to advertise it. Awolowo was not famed for his wealth, and nobody ever defined him in terms of his material wealth. Awolowo lived a disciplined and ordered life. He was cerebral and given to studying and meditation. Even his enemies would not be heard denying his sagacity, and prodigious capacities.

Awolowo's disciples were easy to identify in Nigerian politics. They were the men of ideas and; were distinguished by their temperance and sobriety. The story was once told to me of Chief Ganiyu Dawodu, the late warhorse of Awoist politics on the island of Lagos. A neighbourhood wag had made a mental note of the old man's penchant for wearing what appeared to be the same clothes throughout the week in which they had been together at one political event after another. Rascally wag came up with mischief on the



campaign trail and burnt a hole in the old man's *buba*. Lo and behold, the very same *buba* and *sokoto* the very next day: only thing is, the *buba* appeared miraculously shorn of the previous day's hole. Disciplined Awoist that he was, the old man simply wore clothes made of the same material as did his entire cadre and their legendary leader. *Egba n to line*, it was called.

Not for them the luxuries of these age.

Tinubu is to the Awoists, Akintola reborn, and to a very large extent, they are very correct in my humble opinion. Even as I had hoped and prayed that the old men and I were completely wrong and mistaken in our conclusions, events leading up to Tinubu's collaborations and leadership of critical aspects of the Buhari project, has shown that Tinubu is the true inheritor of Akintola's mantle in Yorubaland.

The Nigeria State is built on a basic lie that has birthed a fundamental assumption that has no correlation with either the truth, and or reality: that the Northern part of Nigeria is one monolithic, homogeneous, and single entity. Nigeria was designed from inception with a “veto” vested in the hands of this North. Lugard and his successors built a country that was easiest to rule in the northern part because of the colonial powers that had preceded them in the territory: the twin Islamic empires of Kanem Bornu, and the Sokoto Caliphate.

I have dealt at length with the origins and consequences of this lie; I shall now show the relevance within the context of the objective realities confronting Nigeria at this time.



The Buhari project was an attempt by the owners of the Nigerian State that emerged out of the civil war of 1967-1970 to wrest back control of the criminal empire that was lost in the flames of Obasanjo's 3rd Term hubris. Nigeria had been ruled since the death of the First Republic -- and particularly since the installation of the Gowon regime after the murder of Ironsi -- by an unspoken agreement. This agreement has the acquiescence of the political "North". This north had nothing to do with geography; it is a north of political interests. This north comprised the entirety of Nigeria, north of the River Niger; which includes the totality of what used to be known as the Northern Region of Nigeria. It had room for the Jukun of T.Y. Danjuma, the Angas...

The *Sardauna* of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello was aware of the delicate construct that the British had bequeathed to their favoured consort's children, and he painstakingly worked to integrate the entire northern Nigeria. Whilst the pecking orders in the northern part was firmly established; the least in the feudalistic order was superior to the best of the South, particularly the hated Igbo, who was feared as much as he was hated. The Arthur Richards (Nigerian) constitution of 1946 established the veto and the myth with the allocation of legislative seats to the regions. Subsequent constitutions of Nigeria have followed this trend. This is the reason -- aside from the criminal revenue allocation formula -- that has rendered a credible population census impossible to achieve in Nigeria till date.

The awakening of the middle belt and the northern minorities in the 1960s, fruits of the political bravery of



southern Nigerian politicians working in concert with the new leaders of the long oppressed peoples of northern Nigerian minority groups, led to a situation where the NPC under the Sardauna had to find political alliances outside of the region in order to retain power at the federal level. The guarantee of a monopoly of power within the northern region had been seriously damaged by the several uprisings amongst the restive ethnic and religious minorities in the region. The Tiv uprisings were in full swing, as were several other historical grievances against the feudalistic chokehold of the Hausa-Fulani ruling class.

The strategic realignment that saw the NPC government drive a schism between Obafemi Awolowo and his erstwhile deputy, Ladoke Akintola, was precipitated by the twin need to cripple the Action Group (AG) and its leader, Awolowo. The uprising in the north was being fanned and encouraged by the ideological and material assistance that the AG and Awolowo were providing to the leaders of the peoples in revolt. The like of Chief Ige were deployed to provide legal services to the beleaguered peoples fighting the northern hegemonies, and the different political platforms that were poised to benefit from the political awakening were aligned with the AG ideologically, and politically.

With the alliance found with him, the NPC at the federal level granted Akintola and his unpopular government the leeway to crack down on voices of dissent, and Awolowo and his lieutenants were herded into prison on treason charges. The West boiled, and Nigeria fumbled its way into the civil



war. Let me be clear; the Nigeria Civil War has its roots in the inability to manage the illusions of a monolithic north, and the discovery of an amoral alliance with the forces of reaction in Yorubaland. Without Akintola, the NPC would have lost its veto in the federal parliament, and Obafemi Awolowo looked poised to wrest the Prime Ministership from Tafawa Balewa.

Against the clear agreement and expectations of the collegiate that brought him to power in 2015, Buhari, true to character, abandoned his pretence of having learnt from the errors of 1985, and reverted to the ethnic irredentism of his earlier tenure, and his religious bigotry became more and more evident. The people that brought him to power were alienated one after the other, He began to undermine the very foundations of the Nigerian power brokers. He has not hidden his preference for his Fulani blood, and, he, more than any other contemporary driver of the Nigerian contraption, has shown a complete lack of sensitivity to the diversity of Nigeria, and the complexities of the lies that have bound it together.

The first of the power brokers to be rudely awakened to the readiness of Buhari to be unfettered by democratic rules was Bukola Saraki. In an audacious power grab that his late father would have applauded, Bukola plotted a coup against the party, and schemed himself into the senate presidency. Buhari's response was swift, amoral, and a foretaste of what were to come as his presidency unfolded. Saraki was dragged



through the Code of Conduct Tribunal, which is run from the presidency; he gamely fought back using his knowledge of the irredeemably corrupt judiciary. Onnoghen's sins are considered unforgivable because of his perceived role in the judicial reprieve granted Saraki.

As Buhari has become hostage to the ones with whom he had corralled himself, the people that brought him to power were firmly pushed away and alienated. Aisha's public denunciations of the Aso Rock cabal and several facts in the public domain support this position. Senator Remi Tinubu wasn't shy about speaking to the issue when she publicly complained of the abandonment of her husband and the other persons who had worked to bring the Buhari government into power. Tinubu was made an orphan of power, and persons considered to be of political value in his spheres of influence, were encouraged to rebel against his authority.

Persons were promoted in spite of him, and his influence was brutally whittled down in the southwest. His preferred candidate for the Ondo gubernatorial election, held in the immediate aftermath of Buhari's assumption of office, was sidelined with the active connivance of the party chairman, Chief John Oyegun, whom he had installed in the assumption that he'd be pliable, and the brutality of the Kogi coup against his man, Abiodun Faleke, was the ultimate slap in the face. Tinubu was orphaned, and began to stay more in London than his homes in Lagos.

The Buhari project is the only time -- to the knowledge of the public -- Obasanjo and Tinubu have ever been known to agree on any issue. I have dealt with the issue of how alike



the two men are; I will not bother to rehash the point. But the truth is that their political fates are linked, and since 2003, the fate of the one has been intricately linked to the other.

When Obasanjo failed to complete the tsunami of 2003, he allowed a wily customer to survive. And where Obasanjo failed to be effective in his succession planning, Tinubu was a resounding success with his. With Obasanjo leaving the Buhari project, and the realization that the 2019 elections were around the corner, Tinubu was restored to influence, and the *Jagaban of Borgu* was reborn.

Bola Tinubu has for long craved the influence, fanatical following, and acceptance of the sort enjoyed by the late sage, Obafemi Awolowo; so much so, that he once had billboards erected around Lagos bearing images and representations of himself, Ghandi, and Awolowo. And he has built up a carefully cultivated image of a progressive populist leader, when the reality shows that he is the exact opposite. Tinubu is unmoored to any moral anchor; he has a rabidly acquisitive spirit; he is sybaritic in the extreme, and lacks both the intellectual and spiritual discipline of Awolowo, the man that he wants to be seen as.

With the foundational lies of a monolithic north exposed by Buhari's careless ethnic irredentism, which ignores the need to be circumspect in dealing with the middle belt and other ethnic minorities in the northern part of Nigeria, the Fulani herdsmen menace, which had always been there before his coming, became a national embarrassment, and multiplied exponentially, even as the security architecture of the country



became suspected accomplices in some of the worst atrocities in the Benue trough. T. Y. Danjuma, the golden boy of northern hegemony, began to speak of a “northern Nigerian Army”. He characterized the skirmishes in the Mambilla as genocidal, and urged his kinsmen to arm themselves.

The entire North Central, and middle belt zones have become quagmires for Buhari in his re-election calculus, and nothing of beneficial consequence may be expected from the South-south, or Southeast. The electoral map does not look good for Buhari, and just as with the NPC and Ahmadu Bello in 1962, the Buhari cabal is in need of Akintola to deliver the Southwest however the task may be achieved. In Tinubu, they have found the true inheritor of the Akintola mantle, and; with the current state of Yorubaland, Tinubu could not have asked for a more vulnerable people.

Awolowo built his political empire on the foundation of knowledge. He weaponized knowledge amongst the Yoruba people. The Yoruba pursued knowledge wherever it was to be found. Schools were built on the cooperative efforts of villages; primary school education was made universally free, and compulsory in the entirety of the western region. He built the very first TV station in Africa, he owned a newspaper, and he wrote copiously. The Yoruba, more than any other Nigerian tribe or ethnicity, looked to eradicate illiteracy in all of its forms.



A person free of ignorance is rarely found in penury, and it is not a matter of accident that the Ekiti Province of the old western region, was the richest of all of the provinces, even as it is today, the poorest of all of the states carved out of the old West. Awolowo's government assured fair prices for the produce farmers, gave them agricultural credits; provided supports and offered targeted subsidies in needed areas. Built roads into the hinterland and opened up the region for agricultural production and trade.

Awolowo encouraged industrialization in a reasoned manner; emphasis was placed on the localization of industries, and the goals were to ensure that there was a value chain created to ensure that the raw materials that were being exported without more were used by the locals to produce replacements for the imported goods the people were consuming. His government built industrial parks, and invested in strategic industries and initiatives. Obafemi Awolowo was a man unlike any that has lived in this clime before or after. He was a man ruled by his fecund visions, and he grasped at a future we in the future have failed to see.

To compare Tinubu to Awolowo is to compare day and night - darkness and light! Please, do not require me to say who is which. The testaments remain for all to behold.

Tinubu is Akintola-reborn. He has taken on the same role as the Akintola of old.

The election in Ekiti pointed out Buhari's intended path to a second term. The people are ripe for the harvest to be reaped



from the weaponized poverty of the last decades, and the gubernatorial election went the way of the highest bidder. Votes were openly bought and sold, and an impoverished electorate, who are wiser than their abusers, and knew from bitter experience that they were caught between the rock and a hard place, simply grabbed the opportunity to get some of the bread for themselves.

“Alaaru to n’jeburedi”

The Osun format shows Tinubu in full flow. It was in Osun that he boasted in the palace of a traditional ruler how he is much richer than the impoverished state, and how the gubernatorial candidate was in the race as a favour to the people. He was clearly power drunk, and the reason for his swagger was soon made evident. Tinubu is a good student of power; he is in a class all by himself, when it comes to the subject of the usage of power. That he is unmoored to morals makes him even more corruptive in his use of power.

I recommend a study of the Osun election to anyone in need of further evidence.

The powers deployed in pursuit of the Kogi Agenda of 2016, which led to the emergence of Yahaya Bello as governor, is what Buhari and his possessing spirits seek to control. That is the battle that has birthed the Onnoghen debacle. Buhari has no interest in fighting corruption. Were that his purpose, Onnoghen should never have been confirmed, and practically the entire judiciary should be in jail. Buhari is only seeking to ensure that the fascist regime he is about to unleash would be above the law.



In 2019, do not die in their wars. Choose your own battles, and fight in them. If it pleases God, you may die in them, but fight for the truth, and you toy with fame, bleed for the truth, and become a hero. Nigeria hasn't been blessed with too many recognized martyrs, and few names have risen to the level of nationalist heroes.



PROLOGUE

WHY NOW?

Silence no Longer an Option



I cannot find peace in keeping quiet... it has pleased God to burden me with the knowledge of the truth...

I HAVE always had a social conscience; I believe this to be a by-product of my childhood; the society in which I spent my formative years; and on a God-given sensitivity to the sufferings of the poor masses of the Nigerian people.

I was born to a civil servant father, and a mother who, in order to raise her children, sold everything except her body. My parents were divorced before my second birthday, and I grew up with my grandmother in my grandparents' home at Inalende in Ibadan.

I come from humble beginnings. We were not poor, but I never went hungry and there was never any form of deprivation, nor were there any hints of creditors lurking around to collect a debt. Mine was a happy, contended childhood, spent cocooned in my grandmother's love.

There were no nursery schools for anyone in my neighbourhood; we all attended what were called “*Jé'lé ó sin'mi*” loosely translated as “let those at home have peace”. These were the forerunners of today's crèches and playgroups. We went equipped with our slates and chinks. Mine was at the basement of what I remember as 'Church



Eleja' in Adamasingba quarters of Ibadan. We would walk in a single file from Inalende to Adamasingba and back; lunch was served at the school and the days were spent learning the alphabets and numbers.

They were happy days.

I graduated to St. Stephen's Primary School at Inalende. This was just across the road from my grandfather's house, where I lived. In my youth, you got to play the postcode lottery when it was time to go to school. The state would place you in the school closest to your home. It did not matter who your parents were, or how much money they had or did not have; the system ensured that you went to the school closest to your home; and thanks to the government, primary school education was compulsory and free.

In 1977, my mother returned to Nigeria from the United States of America, and I left my grandmother's care to live with my mother. She had rented a house at Ojoo, in the outskirts of Ibadan, and I was transferred to Abadina Primary School. Abadina was built by the management of the University of Ibadan to cater primarily for the children of the junior staff who lived mostly in Abadina Village. I flowered in this rustic bucolic environment, and developed a love for books and comics. I read for the sheer pleasure of reading and became a fixture in the children's library next to the Conference Centre. I was a happy child.

In 1978, I wrote the entrance examination into Fiditi Grammar School located in Fiditi, my maternal grandparent's ancestral home, whilst yet in Primary five, and was admitted.



I was ten years old when I left the cocoon of home to embrace my future.

The years went by in a blur and upon graduating in 1983; I passed enough papers to enter Olivet Grammar School in Oyo for Advance Levels, but not enough to enter the university. A further sojourn to Oyo State College of Arts and Sciences (OSCAS) in Ile Ife a year later and I was in 1985 offered admission into Lagos State University (LASU) to read English Language and Linguistics. I would graduate in 1997 - 12 years later - with a degree in Law.

The biographical exercise is necessary in order to provide context for how I have come to arrive where I am today. I cannot find peace with continuing to keep quiet, because it has pleased God to burden me with the knowledge of the truth. Nigeria was better than this, and can be much better than it has become.

My biography mirrors that of most others from my generation. Our parents did not have to be rich, and, or educated, in order for us to get good education. The system worked to deliver value to everybody, and class mobility was a declared goal of government. You may be born to economically disadvantaged parents, but your capacity for upward mobility was not constrained by this; your trajectory was a function of your own willingness to work, and your individual aptitude.

Today, the goal of government appears to be aimed at the segregation of citizens along class lines, and opportunities for class mobility have been strangulated. Nigeria has become a



feudalistic entity where the circumstances of a man's birth determine his future.

Why am I speaking out today?

What do I hope to achieve by raising my voice at a time when the majority appears to be celebrating the Eldorado we had announced upon the coming of our latest set of Messiahs, led by the agent of change himself, President Muhammadu Buhari?

Mine is a generation defined by cowardice. Once upon a time in this country, we had the like of Gani Fawehinmi, Beko Ransome-Kuti, Tai Solarin and a plethora of others with social consciences. These men and women spoke for those without voices; they did not do so for personal gains; some did it at the cost of personal liberty and lost economic benefits because of their commitment to the betterment of the society. Many were jailed, assaulted several times, physically and emotionally, and their means of livelihood were destroyed. They spoke truth to power in the ages of the 'unknown' soldiers, and were physically brutalized with impunity.

Of the tribe of these men and women of conscience, only very few remain, and to witness what age has done to the like of Wole Soyinka; to be confronted with the guilt I feel at my anger over his inability to continue to speak for my cowardly generation, left me no choice but to free myself of the burden of silence, enforced by the cowardly need to blend into the scenery.

I have watched as Professor Soyinka rightly manned the barricades, my entire lifetime. I have observed the many sacrifices and prices he has paid for daring to speak truth to



power. He has been imprisoned for being true to his conscience. He has suffered exile and forced separations from his loved ones and several other deprivations that only he can talk about. He has paid a very high price for the ideals he has lived for. He has not taken the easy roads.

But in recent years, I have found myself becoming increasingly alarmed at the convenient and Wengerian (Arsene) dimensions of his selective criticisms of our political elite. I have applauded as Soyinka took on Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and his co-travellers, Obasanjo and of course, Babangida, and I have waited in vain to hear him say something about the serial malfeasance of the thieves closer to home. I have waited in vain.

For a reason, I was angry with the hero of my youth, but I have since come to the point of realization. Professor is now an old man, he has fought for over 60 years. He is entitled to live out his dotage on his own terms, and it is up to us to embrace our own truths, and speak up as he has eloquently spoken up for our entire lifetimes.

Is it accidental that nobody in my generation has acquired the capacity to speak as the men in my hero's generation? I think not. I believe that we are all products of the environment that nurtures us, and Professor's generation was imbued with a sense of purpose that seems completely obliterated in my own generation. Professor's generation had a surplus of men with the capacity to dream, idealists who had big dreams for the Nigeria State.

The first *coupists*, Kaduna Nzeogwu *et al.*, Fela Anikulapo, Gani Fawehinmi -- that generation had several dreamers and



original thinkers. My own generation on the other hand, is replete with survivalists; peopled with men and women who have become experts in existential living; the art of compromises, even with their own consciences, and the pursuit of personal wealth at the expense of corporate poverty.

My generation has no vision of the Nigeria State; we grew up during and after the Civil War. We were either Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Edo and so on; we were anything but Nigerians, and not believing in the Nigeria State, we pursued individual and personal aggrandizements.

There were periodic and episodic identifications with the Nigeria State, but being unfortunate to have lived as young adults under the several kleptocratic regimes headed by the military, we had no high ideals to live up to, no windmills to charge, and idealistic dreams died quickly in the economic maelstrom that witnessed our youthful years. We are the worst that the Nigeria State has thrown up, existential in outlook, bankrupt in morals.

We are raising children who cannot survive in the country that we will bequeath to them, if things are not quickly reversed. It is this harsh reality that has now loosened my tongue and woken me from inertia. My purpose is to sound the alarm in the hope that we have not travelled too far down this road towards national destruction and we can do a course correction before it is too late.

Silence is no longer an option.



PART 1



TRUTH
&
POLITY (1)



CHAPTER ONE

LIVING A LIE

(I)

An Insincere System

*...what you see in our system today
are mere manifestations of the
problems that we have admitted*



MY people have a proverb “*wón, ní amúkùń erù é wó, ó l’ókè l’ew, ò, e, ò wò’sàlè*” - loosely interpreted, this means: “you queried why the load placed on the head of the knock-kneed fellow is askew; and he retorted: why not appraise the shape of the load from the shape of my leg?”

Definitely, it is inevitable that we are going to have the kind of caricature of a system that we have in Nigeria.

If we have agreed that there are foundational problems, what you see in our system today are mere manifestations of the problems that we have admitted. We are treating symptoms instead of the root cause, which is why everybody that has ever led Nigeria, has always resisted attempts at restructuring. When you say you want to restructure, what you are saying in effect is that you want to re-examine the imbalances that are functions of historical robberies.

Every time the Nigeria State has been restructured after independence, it has been by sheer force of military arms. The 1963 constitution birthed the Midwest and this came about at the instance of Obafemi Awolowo, who assumed that the North and the East needed to allay the fears of the minority groups within their territories. Out of the East, the Oil States were supposed to come out, and out of the North, the Middle Belt was to have been carved out.

If Awolowo's suggestion had been followed, the foundation for Nigeria's unity and true federalism would have become stronger, but Awo's advice was not adhered to.

Rivers State was created in 1967 on the eve of the Nigerian Civil war; the intentions behind its creation were not pure: it



was to Balkanize the Igbo. But it wasn't the only state created at the time. Gowon created twelve states in all. Some other states within Eastern region were carved out in order to gain the support of the Eastern minorities and to dilute the powers of the Igbo states.

The Willink Commission was set up in 1957-58 to address the fear of the minorities in Nigeria, but the only region that implemented the recommendations of the commission was the Western Region. The other two regions remained uniform until after the coup. What then happened after the coup was that, the federal structure was broken up and Nigeria became a unitary state, bearing federal only in name.

That is the fraud.

Nigeria is only federal in name. In reality, it has become more centralized in keeping with the military structure than anything else, which is why it is the federal government that is imposing Local Governments; why the local governments exist only in name as well. The Governors simply appropriate the allocations.



(II)

The Burdened System



*...the system itself encourages
everything ailing our society*

REPEAT: every system produces what it has been designed to produce. If you want to change Nigeria, change the system! Without tackling the systemic preconditions for madness, you cannot cure it. The people are merely responding to the realities of their environment. Why would you pursue merit in an environment that does not value or reward merit? Of course, except you are designed stupidly to pursue it -- which has left the like of me in frustration -- because we are pursuing ideals that don't exist; a mirage.

So, you go to the passport office and make sure you are first on the queue; the officer who is meant to attend to you strolls in lackadaisically, and whilst you are on the queue, he is calling in applicants who had bribed him and his seniors! In the end, he might probably call three of you on the line. And *voila*, he is done for the day!

You cannot plant Okra and expect to harvest cocoa. It is garbage in, garbage out. Why would I want to read and kill myself if I can simply cut corners without ramifications? Assuming my name is Philip Shuaibu from Edo State, for instance; and I know that if I could remove Philip and call myself Mohammadu Shuaibu, I would pass easily for a Northerner, which means I wouldn't need to score as high as



the Edo indigene in national examinations; I then choose to become a citizen of Kano State so I can gain admission to the Nigeria Defence Academy (NDA) quicker.

The point is this: the system itself, for any discerning person, encourages everything ailing our society. It actually promotes and creates the room for these ills to flourish and then we still turn around and flay the same things we have enabled, including the spate of violence currently reverberating across the nation.



(III)

A Skewed Nationhood



*When the overarching intention of the
State is not the common good, all
kinds of madness become normalised*

H ABAKKUK 2: 2-3 says *“Then the Lord answered me and
said:*

*“write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who
reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end,
it will speak, and will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because
it will surely come....”*

In the absence of visionary leadership, profligacy takes the place of vision.

As a young man, if you don't have a clear-cut purpose for your life and you are given huge amount of money by a wealthy person, say N15million; if care is not taken, the money will kill you for the reason that it will lead you into buying mundane things like fast cars and misleading women; you will be fascinated by a purposeless life.

This is the same in the life of a nation.

The nation is the aggregation of citizens.

If as a nation you are working at cross purposes without clarity of vision;

If as a nation, you do not understand that the national gas reserves are in the Niger Delta so, we should build our power plants in the Niger Delta and simply build transmission lines all over Nigeria;



If as a nation you are busy building power plants in the Plateau and Kaduna and other inappropriate places and piping natural gas across vast distances in order to power those places -- Egbin Power Plant is in Ikorodu -- where you don't have any natural gas; it is powered by natural gas which has to be piped all the way from the Niger Delta multiplying the cost of the energy that you are seeking to supply, thereby increasing the inefficiencies in the system..., how does this benefit Nigeria?

When the overarching intention of the state is not the common good, all kinds of madness become normalized. It becomes completely normal for madness to thrive. That is why we are where we are in Nigeria.

The commonplace anomies simply make it impossible to democratize the political space. If the political space were democratized, it would mean that the will of the people would emerge and be supreme. So, the governing hegemony has no interest in promoting the democratization of the political space. In fact, the most dangerous thing that can happen to them would be the democratization of the political space.

It is why it would be difficult to have independent candidacy in Nigeria. Regardless of any noise they might be making today, they cannot afford to have it. If you have an independent candidacy, then people of all hues can come out and challenge the powers that be.

Let me give you a case in point: Obasanjo came out recently and was pushing some coalition to fight APC! What did the emergence of APC do to the emerging oppositions in



Yorubaland, for example?

Somebody like Jimi Agbaje would never have run on the platform of PDP if APC had not emerged. But with the emergence of APC, all the platforms on which he could have conceivably run for governorship in Lagos State had been taken over by the APC, and handed over to Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Jimi was thus marooned into PDP.

All of a sudden, beheading a man became the cure for his headache.

Now you have a situation where everybody who wants to fight the APC is now being marooned again into whatever name they elect to call the emerging coalition party that Obasanjo is chaperoning; or one of the serial smaller parties newly registered and muted by INEC.

The system is designed to produce exactly what it is meant to produce and you cannot find a cure to the problem fighting from within the system.

In 2015, as I watched the emergence of the APC, I became increasingly disillusioned with the political system; and I resolved that I would have nothing to do with it. In February same year, I wrote a piece titled '*Do Not Die in Their Wars*' and felt it was urgent enough to be published by any of the national dailies. That piece made it clear I wasn't going to vote in the coming presidential elections, and I didn't. I could see clearly where it was going to end up.

This was me who used to vote consistently. I voted Buhari in every election except in 2015. I couldn't vote for Buhari in 2015 because it was the year Buhari was unmasked. Having



seen him in all his nudity, I was unimpressed and walked away. Then earlier in 2018, I started toying with the idea of running for the political presidency. Not because I believed I stood any chance of winning, but because I thought it would be an opportunity to draw attention to the madness of Nigeria and thereby forcing the system to debate issues that I believe are critical and in need of urgent address.

Not long after, an acquaintance came to see me and revealed his intention to run for the presidency. I informed him while we discussed that I was definitely interested in the elections of 2019 unlike in 2015, when I kept quiet even when prevailing circumstances were nauseating enough to provoke reactions. I told him that in not-too-distant future our paths would converge. Thereafter, I saw Omoyele Sowore making presidential noises as well and all these issues consecrated my mind and got me to the point where it became much easier for me to draw my conclusions.

These were the conclusions I drew:

As a matter of fact, we cannot change the Nigerian system working within the same system because the system is producing exactly what it has been designed to produce. The people seeking engagement with the system are either going to conform to the system or the system would deny them the space required to ventilate their grievances or articulate their visions.

That said, I also became quickly aware that the only way to change the narrative is not to continually seek to engage this system at the level we are, presently, going about it. Rather, it will be to construct an alternative vision and, while



at this, present to the Nigerian people a clear picture of what is possible and then show them a way to get there.

Anger is not a governing system. Bellyaching also changes nothing. But if we can articulate an alternative vision behind which we can galvanize the people, the existing reality will change. This alternative vision I have meticulously pieced together after due consultation and deliberation with a circle of friends. Without reservations, it is presented in the latter part of this book without which the entire endeavour would be sterile.

Every tree produces fruits. If you have a situation where the system doesn't promote merit, it becomes impossible to demand diligence and merit or meritorious pursuits from members of such society. If all I have to do to succeed is not something that I do but an accident of birth, why should I do anything more. If knowing someone in government office is sufficient to make me rich without the society asking questions about the source of my stupendous wealth, why should I contrive to make personal efforts when in fact, the society doesn't reward diligence?

Take the travails of the Finance Minister Mrs. Kemi Adeosun, for example. The woman didn't do her compulsory one-year National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). Having been vetoed two or three times, and the State Security Service endorsed her; how did she beat the system? She isn't the only person, however, that we have to focus on. The Senate passed her. How did they do so? Though the entire NYSC scheme is completely flawed, there ought to be strict measures for enforcing sanity. Go to the NYSC camp and see how the corps



members are poorly kitted. This is an indication that something is fundamentally wrong with the system that demands the youths spend one year of their life living a lie. People sit down in Lagos and someone else is signing the register on their behalf.

I had initially assumed only the poor serve Nigeria but at the moment, even they have found ways around it.

All these effects are directly traceable to the shambolic system.



(IV)

Rule of Violence



*If a man can speak to you at an intellectual level,
chances are that he will not resort to
physical expression of his frustration*

VIOLENCE is a creation of injustice. People find different outlets for their frustrations. If you shut off every avenue for legitimate ventilation of grievances, what you find eventually is that, there will be combustion and implosions. The violent activities you see are not necessarily the first choice of the culprits of the violence but in most cases, they are actually coming from an abundance of stifled frustrations -- when the person feels there are no other ways of resolving the situation as it were.

Let me give an example: A stutterer's inability to vocalize his thoughts can push him into violence. His frustration would lead to an outburst and just as we have linguistic violence, we also have physical violence.

In fact, the lower the class of the discussants the more likely you would hear expletives feature in the discussion. If a man has enough words in his vocabulary with which to express himself in the language of communication, he is unlikely to use swearwords. But, the lesser the words he has in his cache or the more basic the use of the language is, the most likely he will resort to curses and swear words.

It is not fortuitous that the first words we learn in a foreign language are almost always the expletives. It is because these



are the most basic expressions of feelings. You find that when wannabes learn to speak English Language, it is the cuss words you hear them voice for a start because they are easier to communicate; they are the basic denomination of emotions.

The analogy is to draw attention to physical violence.

If a man can speak to you at an intellectual level, chances are that he will not resort to physical expression of his frustration. He would speak or articulate his point. But when he is incapable of doing so, he may descend to the lowest form of communicating his grievances, which is almost always physical violence.

When you find yourself in a system that perpetually offers simple answers to complex questions: the Hausa man is the cause of your problem; *oh*, the Igbo man is the reason you are not progressing; *oh*, the Yoruba man is the problem, *ah*, the Christians are the people taking all your jobs etc.... It is always the person who looks the least like you or who speaks the least like you that is almost always the cause of your problems.

That is why the violence is almost always targeted at that class.

If you go to the North, the foreigners more often than not live in Sabon Gari, and at every time the Northern peasantries feel the pangs of hunger or frustration, the convenient targets are frequently the inhabitants of Sabon Gari areas.



(V)

Injustice + Inequality = Conflicts + Insurgencies



...violence has flourished because the system has enabled it, nurtured it and ignored the criminalities it has engendered

DISTINCTION has to be made about the reality that Nigeria has a staggering population approaching 200 million people. Our resources are not infinite. Every society, no matter how small, and no matter how rich, exists to regulate the conflicts that arise out of the competition for the allocation of resources. When Nigeria's resources were abundant in relation to demands for those resources, it was easy to maintain the myth of one Nigeria and within the ambit of this myth; it was also easy to maintain the illusion of one North.

But as the resources began to deplete, competitions became fiercer. And the fault lines became easier to exploit. What we see today in Nigeria, the incessant conflicts all over the land, are not in any way or shape unique to Nigeria. What is unique to Nigeria are the institutional frameworks that promote the very same things about which we are complaining and that which guarantees that those things are not going to be addressed. Yet without addressing the demands for justice and equity, what happens is the promotion of violence even when that is not necessarily the original intention of the perpetrators.

For reference, let's consider the violence in the Niger Delta.



The violence in this area has its root in systemic inequality and injustice.

The Nigeria State has denied space for legitimate grievances and agitations.

I was privileged to be at the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) sometimes ago. I went to see a minister of state for petroleum. While there in his waiting room, there were some militants who had also come to see him. At some point, they were talking loudly and abusing one another, describing their exploits. It struck me that the same country that could not find accommodation for Ken Saro-Wiwa has learnt to tolerate miscreants.

At some point, I was compelled to start asking myself: "how did we get here?" A Ken Saro-Wiwa was not in a quest for the self. He presumed to engage the system and asked questions of the system. He wasn't asking questions for himself but asking the system to look at itself and, in doing so, decide whether it was not in need of reforms.

Saro-Wiwa spoke for the Ogoni people, and; in his fight for his people, there were Ogoni people siding against him and his group. Four of them were killed in the battle against themselves and Ken and nine others were held responsible for their murder. For the state to punish Ken, it had to resort to illegalities. Whether Ken was culpable in the murder or not; somebody killed those people.

The Nigeria State that I know is capable of having done the killings, turned around to prosecute the innocent or it could very well be that Ken was in some way culpable. I have



no way of knowing but I am sure that Ken's killing was judicial murder.

But having killed Ken, did the problems stop? It certainly did not. Then the civilians came in; and the likes of Peter Odili proceeded to use the miscreants as political thugs, who then transmuted to militants in the Greeks.

Some of these people killed Sokari Harry Marshal, former national Vice-Chairman of All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) on March 5, 2003. This was the beginning of militancy, and it grew to become malignant.

What I am advancing is that Militancy in the Creek has its root in political thuggery. The boys who were political thugs became the militants. Who are these militants? They are kidnapers, notorious cultists and oil "bunkerers" who had state protection because of their values to the powers-that-be.

Under the wings of illegitimate governments -- illegitimate because of their disconnect from the people they purport to rule -- militancy rankled and became the hydra-headed monster that it has become today.

Let's look at *Boko Haram*.

A former commissioner in Borno State, Alhaji Buji Fai was nominated by *Boko Haram*. He too was killed alongside Mohammed Yusuf. Both of them were Bunu Sherif Musa's political militants. That was the genesis of *Boko Haram* in Nigeria. Today, *Boko Haram* has morphed into one of the deadliest terrorists organizations in the world.

What about the Fulani Herdsmen terrorist group?

It is ranked the fourth deadliest terrorist organization in the world, yet we don't address them by that epithet in



Nigeria, where the bulk of their killings takes place. Why? It is convenient for some people to pretend that these are not terrorists. Truth is: they are enjoying the supports of people in power.

Fulani Herdsmen didn't start killing under Buhari; they have always been there. However, this is the one time they have enjoyed complete impunity in their nefarious operations. They carry out onslaughts for hours unchallenged. Entire villages and local government areas have been displaced and taken over -- these are within the territory of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and we are supposed to be praying?

The minister of defence came out and said it is because of the anti-grazing laws. The president would enjoin the victims to be their brothers' keepers. The presidential spokesman would counsel that you give up your land in order to live; and, we pretend that everything is alright!

Yes, violence has proliferated in Nigeria, but it has not exacerbated because we suddenly became violent overnight. It has flourished simply due to the incontrovertible truth that the system has enabled it, nurtured it, and has ignored it and the criminalities that it has engendered.



(VI)

Crooked System = Bad Leadership
...Nepotism as foundation



*Nigeria is blighted by bad leadership...
product of a bad system*

IT all goes back to the same underlining questions: Who is the Nigerian citizen? What is the content of his citizenship? How equal are our destinies and how common are these destinies? It is in the answers to these questions that the solutions are embedded. And without answering these questions, we are just beginning; we are on the way to Mogadishu.

It is inevitable that we talk about some individuals in the ruling echelon who have played damning key roles in our unimaginable leadership recklessness and irresponsibility.

Individuals run system. But in talking about the Nigerian individuals, the danger is always that we focus on the individuals and, subsequently forget the system that created them. Systems make it possible for certain individuals to become whatever they have become.

For anybody to even presume to lead others, he must be egotistic. There is an egotistic content to leadership in which you believe you are better than the others and have the capacity to hold the reins. That is what actually qualifies you to lead.

An Obasanjo in another environment would probably have been a visionary leader because he would have been



constrained by the system. You cannot birth anything without having a huge ego. Obasanjo has a planet-size ego. The unfortunate thing is that his ego is unrestrained by an enabling system. The system allows him to feed his it without limitation.

Bola Ahmed Tinubu would have been miles ahead of an Awolowo but regrettably, he is unconstrained by the moral code and discipline that Awolowo had in abundance. It is the same powers that Awolowo exercised that Bola Ahmed Tinubu is exercising today. The only difference being that Awolowo was a man who had massive self-discipline, humongous and unbelievable self-discipline and he could take his eyes away from personal gains, which unfortunately is something that Tinubu seemingly lacks in totality. He is completely, and utterly appears incapable of anything that you may define as self-discipline. Visionary in his thoughts but not so in most things he touches. Yes, he births ideas almost per second; he nurtures disciples but allows them to be corrupted.

All these are possible because there is no overarching vision that has created a system that would have streamlined these men and made them fall in line. Instead of visionary leaders, you have robber barons, who are acting like frontiersmen because there are no rules guiding them.

Nigeria is blighted by bad leadership but that bad leadership, as I have repeatedly said, is a product of a bad system.

In order for you to realize how skin-tight this is, all you need to do is look at Donald Trump and America.



If Donald Trump were to be Nigerian, he would be an Obasanjo and would have succeeded beyond your wildest imaginations. Situate him in Nigeria and he would have decimated the National Assembly. The Legislature would be gone for good; the Judiciary would be in his pocket; the people would be eating out of his hands. But, a system has constrained him for the fact that there is one in place with an overarching vision or a system that is built on a principal structure; which are both absent in Nigeria.

The problem is not in our stars. It is actually to be found and located in our system.

What is the underlining vision that has birthed that system? Simple: Nepotism!



(VII)

The Constitution as a Burden



... the overarching vision behind the constitution
is not for national but sectional and parochial interest

WHEN nepotistic intentions give birth to anything, you cannot see beyond the immediate gratifications. Consequently, we have a system that is not futuristic in outlooks, we lack vision and, in the absence of it, the people perish. This is exactly what we see.

The Book of *Habakkuk* 2:2-3 referenced earlier is very much important in deciphering the context I am talking from. In order for you to understand this properly, I would like to break it down into fragments. By so doing, I would first of all cite

Montesquieu's *Theory of the Evolution of States*.

His argument was that States emerged out of a social compact theory. In the original State, he said, life was short, brutish, and men were competing against one another and killing themselves because it was the rule of the jungle premised on the survival of the fittest. The man with the biggest gun ruled the streets. Because life was so short and brutish, people were just dying and killing one another; men said look, "let's come together and form a society; we would all donate our rights to the society and the society becomes sovereign and would now enforce the rules we have all agreed over individual self."



These rules, we may liken to a constitution.

If we can now come back to the Book of *Habakkuk 2: 2-3*; what it is asking to be written down is the vision. Every constitution is actually a vision. When you *“write it down and make it plain that those who read it may run with it,”* it means that, it is not everything you are writing down, and if it is a vision, you are not writing what is happening now but what may happen tomorrow that has governed what is happening. And as you are writing the constitution, you are conscious of the fact that it may not necessarily meet with approval from all of us but it is written for all of our good to which we have all acceded and agreed to the need to have it written down, to make plain but ultimately, for our collective good.

That is the assumption and those are the ideals.

But when you are writing a constitution and it is not necessarily propelled by common interest and common good, but driven by sectional interest and sectional good; it is in this Nigeria that we are told some State capitals were determined on the basis of individual convenience and nepotism – whose village is where, and who married who?

Asaba is today the capital of Delta State because the wife of the then Head of State hailed from there. Some states as we have known were created specifically for certain Generals and not necessarily because of their economic viability. Anytime Nigerians have sat down together to deliberate on how they wish to be governed, one common thread has been the preponderant opinion that says we should have six regional federating units. Whether it is pre-Independence or post-Independence, every time that the Nigerian people have



sat down together, the majority have always asked for six regions.

The basis for this request has always been the confidence in the economic viability of those regions. How many of the 36 States of Nigeria today can survive on their own without subvention from the Federal purse, and the Federal purse in question, how is it funded?

How equitable is it, that the wine I am drinking in Lagos, you take the VAT from it and share; take the majority of it and give it to a State that has criminalised alcohol? If I drink this same alcohol in Zamfara State, I am a criminal liable to imprisonment and fine; yet, you take the VAT to buy the machete with which to execute the amputation of an offender!

As I had written earlier, when the overarching vision behind the constitution in question is not for the common good or for national interest, but for sectional and parochial interest, how do you in good conscience enforce such a constitution, and even when you are enforcing it, can you truly do so uniformly?

A Nigerian citizen is guaranteed the right of association, or worship. How easy is it for me to set up a church in Sokoto State? I am guaranteed the freedom of movement; but how well has the state stood behind that right to protect it in certain parts of this country? And in seeking to avoid a common enforcement of those rights, how complicit has the State become; and how has the State promoted the divisions or enabled the promotion of disunions because of its inability to be even-handed in dealing with its own citizens? So yes, we do have a constitution but the constitution doesn't flow



from the people. It is not constrained by any vision and it is why it has birthed the madness that we see on a daily basis.



(VIII)

The State and the Rule of Law



... preservation of the State and the governing system for the benefits of the beneficiaries have assured that the law cannot rule in Nigeria

WAS called to the Nigerian Bar in 1999. For me, Law might as well have been a calling. Whatever else I was going to be, being a lawyer was the foundation. I was born to be a lawyer.

Today's reflections have been provoked by a distraction raised by the elevation of the doctrine of the Rule of Law into the trending topic of discussions that have ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous, and now seeks to benumb brains already assailed by existential preoccupations.

The Law does not rule in Nigeria.

The Nigeria State cannot afford for the law to rule. Nigeria is a criminal State, and if it were to be accountable for its own actions, Obasanjo, Babangida, Abdusallami, each of the people you would call Nigerian statesman would either be in prisons, or would have been executed for high crimes and treason against the State.

If the Law were to rule in Nigeria, Jonathan and his entire gang would be in jails; stripped of their loots; and we would have been spared the cackling of vultures that the PDP current gatherings truly represent. If the law were to rule in Nigeria, the APC would not be the Laundromat of crooks



relaunched as saints, by the Ali Baba with the legions of thieves.

If the law shall rule in Nigeria, the president would not presume to harbour the blighted pension man Maina; the flawed executive secretary/CEO of the Health Insurance agency Usman Yusuf would not be back on the job; the indicted secretary of state Babachir would be in jail, and NNPC's compromised Baru would be busy explaining when, how and why the petroleum subsidy has reappeared.

If the Law rules in Nigeria, we would not be hearing the abomination of Professor Sagay justifying crimes allegedly committed by the finance minister; El Zaky-Zaky would be in his own bed; Dasuki would be answering for his own crimes, his fate determined by a justice system that is anchored on the rule of law. We would not behold the gathering of crooks the Council of State meeting represents.

L'etat C'est Moi.

The Nigeria State is designed without any intention of allowing the Law to rule. The powers required to keep the system as it is currently structured and governed from collapsing cannot be subsumed beneath the rule of Law. The Nigeria State endures exactly because the Law does not rule; men rule in these parts. It is why we do not have institutions. It is why we have strong men.

The EFCC has served three presidents before Buhari. It has been blessed with the overwhelming goodwill of the Nigerian people. I cannot remember when that agency ever acted without reading the body language of the president in power. The EFCC has not fared any better under the reign of the



'Saint.' The harvest of crooks promised the victims never managed to move beyond media convictions. The system that allowed the ascension of their current patron ensured that they had been defanged at creation.

I am grateful to Buhari for his honesty, candour, and boldness in declaring before the gathering of liars, sorry, lawyers, that the security of the State takes pre-eminence over and above any impotent protestations and, or pretence about the rule of some imaginary law.

Where was the rule of law when the assembly elected its own leaders?

Where was the rule of law in Benue, Kogi, Taraba, Plateau?

Has the rule of law been on vacation in the Niger Delta?

National Security has always been more important than the rule of law in Nigeria. The problem is that the hapless citizens confuse it for the security of their own lives, and properties. The preservation of the State and the governing system for the benefits of the beneficiaries, and not the non-existent citizens, have assured that the law cannot rule in the Nigeria State as currently constituted.

Buhari's second term will bring to the fore his fascist tendencies. It is the only way he knows, and it is the easiest route for him. I expect him to take the easy road.

When the hour comes, I am certain that the man, long dead in men, shall arise, and we will find the grace to not only speak the truth without fear; but to envision and birth the nation where the law, and the law alone, will not only rule, but shall suffice for the protection and promotion of National Security.



CHAPTER TWO

THE BURDEN OF BEING

(I)

Collapse of Public Institutions

6

...the state has failed to the point that we do not believe in its capacity to care for our lives.

IN unequivocal terms, the system has failed in all facets. The education sector is among the worst hit. Today, nobody wants to send their children to government-owned schools across the country because the system is in dire limbo. It is only the poorest of the poor who still send their children to government schools. Almost everyone takes their children to private schools no matter how rundown they are. Even gatekeepers these days send their children to private schools. Already, we have conceded that we don't or no longer expect anything civilized from the Government, whereas, I had attended a government school in my time.

Similarly, the same hex has smeared the health sector that most people no longer consult public hospitals. What happens nowadays? People are hesitant visiting government-



owned hospitals for the reason that they see more fatalities in such hospitals in comparison to privately managed ones. From the time of conception, you do not send your wife to government hospitals. When you do, it is chiefly because you are considering that they are used to battling complications at the stage of delivery, and you are seeking to benefit from their experience, even as you oil the system to make it work for you. Most people would send their wives to General Hospitals because of this, but when you do, you are constrained by the system to purchase everything that you would need.

You pay for practically everything, and maybe the private hospital might have charged a N100,000 for delivery but you are spending like N50,000 in Government hospital which you are happy to spend on assumption, which is rightly so, in most cases, that the doctors have experienced all hues of complications peculiar to labour.

When a doctor handles about 20 births in a day, unlike private hospitals with barely fewer than five in a week, he is, therefore, adjudged to have seen all sorts of conditions and deemed adequately equipped to handle most daunting likelihoods as far as pregnancy is concerned.

You take your wife there but the moment she gives birth, other than for the child in most cases to go back and get immunization, that child is taken away from the public health sector and taken into private hospitals for every healthcare requirement. Except for the most serious ailments, nobody goes back to the government hospitals. When people go back, it is on the impression that the public hospitals have seen



more varieties of serious illnesses given the volume of desperate poor patients that they treat on a daily basis.

When it comes to security, every street has its own arrangement. If they are not paying Mobile Police personnel, they are paying *Olode* or OPC (Odu'a Peoples' Congress). We have all sorts of arrangements, and we erect barricades on the road to restrict movement. In the most basic expression of the State, there is failure; recognized failure. And this is also evident in Lagos; an urban area far away from Fulani herdsman.

Security is the basis for the formation of the State, but the State has failed to the point that we have no expectations and do not believe in its capacity to care for our lives.

For water, you sink your own borehole. If you don't sink yours, you either depend on a most erratic public water corporation if it exists in your area; or simply get water tanks and you store water.



(II)

The Normalisation of Madness



*... Nigeria is living on borrowed
time; its demise is a tragedy
foretold, a self-fulfilling prophecy*

ON Monday the 14th of April 2014, I woke up to the news of a twin-bomb blasts at a crowded bus station in Nyanya, a town in Nasarawa State, but very close to Federal Capital, Abuja. At least 88 souls were slaughtered by official accounts, and over 200 commuters were maimed. It wasn't the first time I had heard was one bombing or the other, and such news was becoming a routine, even at the time. But I was scheduled to be in Abuja on the 15th, and the news had me worried.

I called up a dear friend, who has always taken care of me in the strange land of Abuja, and he assured my safety, and that I should keep my appointment at the Federal Ministry of Housing.

My friend picked me up at the airport; he reassured I had no need to be worried; everything was fine. I, coming from the relative sanity and safety of Lagos, found his reassurances rather curious, but having survived the turbulent politics of student unionism at the Lagos State University LASU together, I figured he knew what he was talking about.

Driving into Abuja city from the airport we ran into a couple of checkpoints manned by fierce-looking soldiers. Aside from these, however, everything appeared completely



normal. The streets were packed with commuters heading to their offices and going about their businesses. I was taken aback by the normalcy I found on the streets as we drove into Abuja.

My friend gave me the local gist of how the bulk of the casualties were junior civil servants waiting for buses for their morning commute to work in the Federal Capital, and how the official death toll had been deliberately reduced to limit the impact of the terror. The news only served to increase my astonishment, at the normalcy of the streets I was seeing all around me.

As we drove into the Ministry of Housing, I was troubled by the normalcy of the environment I saw all around. The workers -- junior, senior, everyone -- were going around doing their thing. You wouldn't have known that any dastardly event had happened in their town just the day before.

The director I was scheduled to see was in a meeting with the minister, and I was to wait until he was done. The wait increased my awe, and confirmed my worst fears. I was ensconced in a room with the personal staff of the director I went to see, and I was an unwilling witness to their day as it evolved. They carried on as if nothing had happened the day before. I witnessed deals being cut, bribes being offered, demanded, and given. It was business as usual.

When they talked about the bombing, it was as if they were uninvolved. The victims for them were just numbers! There was a detachment from the event that just happened to their fellow citizens. It was something that happened to



people that might as well not have been citizens like them. I left Abuja amazed at the complete lack of empathy for the victims, by the survivors. The survivors had become desensitised to the madness all around them.

I have watched this process of desensitisation move across Nigeria as the bombings have proliferated. I have read accounts of our Air Force bombing and killing civilians in their hundreds. The lives of Nigerians have become cheap and precarious, and the living have carried on, seemingly without a care for the dead.

I had cause to reflect on our collective disdain for memorials; and I wrote provoked by the events held in commemoration of the first anniversary of the Finsbury Park terror attack. A Muslim man of Asian origin was mowed down in the attack and, a year later, London stood still in memory of the dead. I admonished Nigerians to emulate the British respect for the dead; emulate their examples.

Over a hundred citizens were brutally slaughtered in Plateau State at a time in 2018. The news of slaughters has become mundane; we have become completely desensitised to news of death. The World Cup has been even more of a welcomed distraction, and the news of the genocide struggled for space with the exploits of the Eagles, fresh from their conquest of the minnows of Iceland.

As news filtered in from the Plateau, my despair and despondency with events in my country grew, and as the soccer match against Argentina approached, I struggled to find the enthusiasm for the mundane business of football. Pictures of butchered women and children filled me with



horror, and I found peace the only way I know how. I wrote from the depth of my pains.

As the Eagles took to the field in the last world cup qualifying round, I looked for the black armbands in memory of the dead. But there was nothing of the sort in sight. I was so pained by this most flippant act of indifference, that I posted my disappointment as the match got underway. I edited out the part where I prayed that the Eagles should lose. I am glad that my unpublished prayer was answered.

Imagine for a second that there was a similar case of mass casualties in the UK; could you have seen the English take to the field without any attempt to honour the dead? I think not. My conspiratorial mindset tells me that the powers-that-be wouldn't want attention drawn to the madness in Nigeria, and then the man in me asked -- assuming that there was any such injunction, what would have happened had the players refused to abide by what would have been an unconscionable order?

The Albanian players in the Swiss team did not ask permission before electing to show their solidarity with the victims of the Serbian genocide; and their solidarity with the victims spoke for the ones who had been silenced in the wars that ended over a decade before.

The powers that be in Aso Rock might very well have issued a *fatwa* against the adornment of black armbands; the minister of sports, a man from the Plateau, might very well have decided to stifle any such move, believing that such a protest might imperil his job; but evil only thrives when good



people elect to be silent. John Mikel Obi grew up on the Plateau, did it occur to him to speak for the silenced? What about the others?

The man shall not prosper who covereth his sins. How is a nation to prosper when it routinely buries its sins? Nigeria is living on borrowed time, and its demise is a tragedy foretold, and a self-fulfilling prophecy. So, the referee was unjust? Yeah right! How much justice exists in our country? The dead are gone, and black armbands or not, they are beyond our collective amnesia, it is the living in need of memory, for as they are today, so shall we also be, one day.



(III)

The Untouchable Thieves

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*...The Nigeria system is incapable of delivering justice...
never designed to produce justice*

A HOUSE divided against itself will fall. It is on the foundation of the foregoing I ask: why would the system as currently structured want to probe those the public perceive to have robbed the state blind? The system has produced a swarm of thieving children, on its very own; the system that birthed them is not complaining. However, only the suffering masses are bellyaching.

Notwithstanding, when it suits the system to use them as scapegoats or use them to whip up the frenzy of the uninformed mob, it trots them out and you will hear tales of how much Diezani Alison-Madueke has stolen. The system will never try her; if it does, it would lift the putrefying lid and expose every member of its family who has benefited from stewardship in power.

Diezani took off to London and was the person everyone was chorusing as being at the pinnacle of all the heists of the previous administration. A few months after she had left upon Buhari's emergence in power, I remember the *Ovation* magazine publisher, Dele Momodu -- a faithful child of the system -- trolled out on the cover page of his then new tabloid, *Boss*. We could see Diezani all made up and looking



as if she was close to death and ready to give up the ghost at any second.

There was a full page dedicated to how she was terminally ill with cancer and undergoing chemotherapy. Up till today, I have known this as the fact that the Federal Government has never sought the repatriation of Diezani from the UK Government and until the Nigerian Government begins extradition proceedings against Diezani, I will prefer to be spared the stories of her stealing.

If they were truly interested in making her stand trial for all the serial crimes of unimaginable embezzlement for which they have convicted her on the pages of all the newspapers, they would have asked for her extradition. But why would they ask for her extradition when members of the current government are using the same playbook that Diezani used in her time at NNPC? If you try her, how do you exonerate your own people involved in similar crime? How do you exactly put her to trial without exposing how much rot is rampant in the oil sector?

Today, Buhari is the oil minister, and he is superintending the sector that is spending about three times as much on petroleum subsidy as was spent in the Goodluck Ebele Jonathan years. The same events that he termed corrupt when he was the presidential aspirant, the same process everyone in his cabinet today vilified and labelled extremely corrupt, is still in vogue. All they have done is to have dusted up the playbook, improved on it a bit and the beat goes on. How would such a system presume to deal with something that benefits the entire members of its class?



What I do know is that we can spend as much time as we can, critiquing, vilifying and examining the fruits but until you have dealt with the tree, you are merely wasting your time.

Diezani was merely a faithful servant of the system, and I will go as far as to say that in a few years' time, she will be back within the system, duly restored to her place, and rehabilitated. You will be pardoned if you thought she was some sort of saint that had merely been scapegoated by a very dictatorial, hypocritical and wicked Buhari. They would have done a fantastic job. The man in charge would have given more than enough ammunition with which to wash her clean. Thus, I am baffled why people talk about dealing with people who have gamed the system. The system is designed to be gamed and will be gamed by other people as far as the system remains intact.

Nigerians call them criminals but I don't.

In the case of James Ibori, which I adequately thrashed in one of my writings, he was never extradited to Nigeria. What happened was that Goodluck Ebele Jonathan outsourced the punishment. It was a personal thing. The Nigerian system is incapable of delivering justice. It was never designed to produce justice.

A Yoruba proverb says *“kòsì amúni abèrè wò lówà, ènìyàn tódè bèrèwò, òhun náà fẹ́ jẹ́ tiẹ̀ ní,”* which means “nobody is interested in catching a thief; they are only interested in making enquiries, and the person making enquiries is not even interested in catching the thief but in having his own share of the cake. Ibori offended persons and his ego made it



impossible for him to be ignored. He also didn't hang around in Nigeria; he would rather take off.

If Ibori wasn't injudicious and had really stayed his grounds, I am sure nothing would have happened to him; worst-case scenario is; they would have called Chief Edwin Kiagbodo Clark to help him beg Jonathan, but he didn't see the need for this. His ego was overblown. He left for Dubai and the people tailing him saw that as an opportunity; a very convenient way to deal with him. The same facts that were used to jail Ibori were readily available to the Metropolitan Police, the one relating to Econet transaction, which also indicted the *Obong* Attah as and the Tinubus of this world.

The Metropolitan Police had never seen it fit to touch any of these other persons because nobody had committed a crime against the British government. It was a crime against the Nigerian government and the only reason Ibori was dealt with was because he no longer enjoyed the protection of the Nigeria State and the system, and was thus left to be dealt with by the British judicial system.

If we talk about the prosecution of criminals amongst the elite class, we cannot really hold Ibori up as an example of how justice has caught up with any member of our thieving politicians. That was never the case. All that happened to Ibori was that, he felt too big for his panties, his ego was too large and was abusing a sitting president. Consequently, he was hounded out of the country, because he was stupid, he could have stayed and negotiated. Nothing would have happened to him; after all, Bola Ahmed Tinubu stayed



behind after Obasanjo's days and nothing has happened to him. If anything, his image was laundered through the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT) and he was given a clean bill of health. This, I believe, was part of the agreement for the 2011 elections.

When we reflect on these cases, let's be clear: the Nigerian system doesn't have the capacity to prosecute or punish anyone who has not offended the powers-that-be.

When you look at the cases of Jolly Nyame, former governor of Taraba State, and that of Jonah Jang, former governor of Plateau State, you will see very clearly there were mere situations where the system was dealing with people who had fallen foul of its standard. Don't forget that Sule Lamido, former governor of Jigawa State, variously indicted by all kinds of panels and EFCC is still walking free till date. Bafarawa, who is on record for having collected about NI.1 billion or so from Jonathan for prayers, is walking free.

None of these people has been touched. Jolly Nyame is a Christian from Taraba who became governor against all odds. The former Governor of Adamawa, Murtala Nyako, is walking free today. The one that succeeded him that was convicted was given a clean bill pending appeal and is walking free as well. We may find occasional victims to be fed to the lions in the circus of anticorruption crusade, which happens from time to time but, be assured of one thing: none of the victims you will see Federal Government feed to the lions remains useful to the system. If they were useful, the system would have found ways to rehabilitate them.

Understand clearly that the system is never ever interested in truly delivering justice because justice - as



interpreted by the system - is only for the poor and those who have run afoul of the system. If justice were to prevail in Nigeria, why did Kemi Adeosun remain minister for finance after the fact of her national service certificate forgery? The obvious is, either she had been an accessory before and was compensated for a job well done.

What kind of justice are we really talking about?

In the case of Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, he simply ran his mouth in the wrong place, at the wrong time, against a man who is exceedingly vindictive. A good student of power, Obasanjo knows how to deploy power. I think in Bayelsa, at the time, we had about six House of Assembly members impeaching a sitting governor. To know everything that transpired against him was a State conspiracy, when he snuck back, he would have been sent back to the British Government to further stand trials. It must have dawned on his persecutors that the humiliations had been satisfactory.

Upon the emergence of Jonathan's administration, Alamieyeseigha was pardoned. Not only was he pardoned; he became an aspiring senator before his untimely demise. He was "our thief". The only reason he could be "our thief and not your thief" is because everybody is stealing. Everybody has his or her own thief and the more the person democratizes the stealing process, the more he assures his own utility.

Ibori was in jail and was enthroning governors. He made two governors from jail. You couldn't say he was a thief considering this feat. He was "our thief" and not "your thief". At the expiration of his prison sentence, he came back to a



rousing welcome from his people. The Delta State governor himself, a protégé of Ibori's thievery, organised a red-carpet reception for Ibori, his godfather!

To understand the phenomenon of "it is our thief and not your thief," you would need to drill down to the granular of the disconnect between the governed and the government.

In the first place, the purpose of government has been lost. For the average citizen, there is nothing expected of the people in power. When the man in power dignifies the members of his constituency with some measure of recognition, as exemplified in the Ayodele Fayose populist style of sitting down to eat *Boli*, or helping to fry *Akara* by the roadside, it is because the government is ordinarily distant from the people.

The people find it captivating that this 'big' guy demystifies the government; he sits down and eats with them, a method that removes all bubbles or air around such exalted offices. Imagine a woman whose entire wares in a day -- all the *Akara* she is frying for a day -- cannot give her N2000 profit and then; the governor comes around to her stall, with his retinue of aides and followers, eats all her wares valued at less than N2000!

Afterwards, she is rewarded beyond her wildest imagination. Of course, the governor has endeared himself to the woman. The one who didn't eat *Akara* with her, what did she ever gain from him? The dilapidated school that her children attend remains same but, at least, this one governor dines with her. The moribund healthcare remains same as it



has always been. So, there is relativity and, hence a sense of solidarity from the masses that is not really based on actual performance. This is a function of the common touch.

The guy sits down with them, goes to the *Amala* joint and eats with them, behaves like one of them and accords them the recognition they never got from the one who was always speaking big English and so distant from the governed. Likewise, Alamieyeseigha would sit down and blend with his own people. He would eat *kpokpo Garri* with them and drink *Akpeteshie* with them; he had the common touch and, maybe, would also sit down and eat fish with his people. In reality, the guy had done nothing for the people but he had brought government closer to their doorsteps!

In Ekiti, Fayose called it 'stomach infrastructure' on the evidence that those who were really shouting "infrastructural developments" never really did anything tangible for the masses. Fayose was busy with 'stomach infrastructure', where others were sitting down in their elitist offices doing nothing yet criticizing those doing 'stomach infrastructure' instead of building infrastructure.

The guy adopted what they used as a term of denigration and turned it into a populist slogan. All these anomalies have flourished as stated earlier simply because citizens do not expect anything from the government any longer, having been disillusioned for so many years.



(IV)

A warped Criminal Justice System

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*The real criminals sit in judgment over
the victims...those pushed into life of crime*

A NATION perennially ruled by visionless liars and crooks, rarely elevates good men and women as judges; and as corruption has taken root over the last 30-40 years, this tendency has become entrenched, and has come to define the appointive processes to the judiciary and the criteria for elevation to the superior courts. Once at the Supreme Court, however, elevation is based on turn-by-turn; and turn is taken on the basis of seniority on the court's bench. It is Mr. Onnoghen's turn.

Except it be in error, or the person develops the inconvenience of a conscience; the most intelligent crooks decorate the pinnacles of the hierarchy of our judiciary, mirroring the society itself and just as hypocritical in its posturing as the generality of Nigerians. The real criminals sit in judgment over the victims and those pushed into life of crime get sent to the finishing schools for aspiring criminals, our prisons.

We have the judiciary we deserve...

Whatever becomes of Onnoghen, let nobody deny him his seat on account of unproven allegations of corruption. If he is deemed *kwarapt*, by all means, prosecute him. Not on the



pages of newspapers or blogosphere, the courts do not exist solely for the victims populating our cells; jails have hosted saints and martyrs for eons.

A trial and perhaps conviction of no less than a Supreme Court justice will restore confidence in our judiciary and will go a long way to instil discipline in the judiciary and reduce, if not eliminate, the impunity with which injustice has been allowed to reign in that temple. The spectacle of Babachir Lawal in the next court or cell, as the case may be, will only strengthen the government's hands in its crusade against corruption. The deodorant must become *Otapiapia* with automatic alacrity.

Diezani has been repeatedly convicted on countless counts of stealing and we have been shown pictorial and documented evidences of her manifest corruption. What I find curious is: till date, neither the EFCC nor any other Nigerian investigative and/or prosecutorial agency or body, has sought her extradition from the cold comforts of *Mama Charley*.

If you truly believe that this government is serious about fighting corruption, please build your snowman in Tinubu Square. Until then, please look well, any time you hear them sing the corruption song in justification of some dodgy actions and/or inactions. Let someone invent some other excuse; after all, aircraft maintenance metamorphosed into a lever to the senate.

In the absence of a clear legal basis for denial of his elevation, the delay in the substantive appointment of Mr. Onnoghen adds to the unnecessary and unhelpful



atmosphere of dishonour that has enveloped the judiciary in recent times. This stinks, and will further undermine an already compromised system. Nobody wins.



(V)

Dubious Provenance, Questionable Quality

‘

Nigeria constantly inflicts pains; the only time it decides to offer you water... you are eternally grateful.

WHEN it comes to power, you have multiple generators; you have inverter, solar and so on. At some point in my life, I had three generators that were running an eight-hour shift. I had to plan without NEPA; presume electricity wouldn't be restored for a long time and this is not far from the reality on ground.

There is a presumption that the State is not going to give you any of these things so you go ahead and prepare yourself to replace the State. Constantly even when it is unexpressed, every Nigerian lives with the assumption that the State doesn't add any relevance to his or her life.

When you have conditioned yourself to expect nothing from the State, it is not too far a leap from the point where the State becomes immaterial to you.

Let's use the metaphor of an abusive husband. Say the Nigerian State is an abusive husband; the few occasions where he (abusive husband) appears to take the direction of the abused wife -- because she is already conditioned not to expect anything good from him -- she grabs the little that is thrown at her with both hands.



That is the relationship of Nigerian citizens to the State. It is not that Nigerian citizens naturally are imbued with a sense of refusal to accept that the State owes them something, but consistently, he has learnt to expect nothing. Nigeria constantly inflicts pains. The few times when it decides to offer you iced water or even water of whatever colouration at all, whether hot or cold, you are eternally grateful.

And that is what may explain the phenomenon of the like of Ibori, Alamiyeseigha, Tinubu to a large extent; their ilk thrive given that nobody expects anything tangible from the state.



(VI)

Awkward Fight against Corruption

‘

*Our educational system is deteriorating....
Unemployment figures are embarrassing*

VARIOUS commentators on the Nigerian project, from iconoclastic musicians, such as Fela, to professional activists, military apologists and rationalists -- all concerned Nigerians have come to agree that corruption is a major problem responsible for the retrogression of the Nigeria State. Former President Jonathan took it a step further, when he said we have mischaracterised the problem and that what we generally refer to as corruption, should instead be referred to as 'stealing'.

They were all right, yet they were also all wrong.

In my university days, we used to sing a song at the Students Union Congress and, or, at rallies when seeking to mobilize ourselves for one of the many protests that defined our times on campus. It goes thus: *Gbogbo wọn ní wọn lówó ñbẹ /2ce*

Bí Nigeria ti sẹ n'jàjé

Gbogbo wọn ní wọn lówó ñbẹ

We would then proceed to mention the names of the different persons, whom in our idealistic views, have contributed to



the rape of our commonwealth and the consequential
abortion of our collective future and dreams for Nigeria.

Buhari nà l'ówó ñbẹ

Babangida nà l'ówo ñbẹ

Obasanjo nà l'ówó ñbẹ

Bí Nigeria ti sẹ n'bàjé.

Gbogbo wón ní wón l'ówó ñbẹ

We had a laundry list of serving and past leaders of the Nigerian government, whom we held liable for the damage we were witnessing, and we sang this dirge to indict them; to mourn what we saw as the wanton, crude and thoughtless destruction of our future.

I left the university system in 1997. Some of my contemporaries have gone on to become ministers, commissioners, legislators, judges, and several others have graduated to become members of the Nigerian elite, professional, economic and political. I have since changed my song in recognition of the glaring reality of our situation:

Gbogbo wa lá l'ówó ñbẹ 2ce

Bí Nigeria ti sẹ n'bàjé.

Gbogbo wa lá l'ówó ñbẹ

Amofin, nà l'ówó ñbẹ

Tailor nà l'ówo ñbẹ

Awon Teacher nà l'ówó ñbẹ

Driver nà l'ówo ñbẹ

Bí Nigeria ti sẹ n'bàjé.

Gbogbo wón ní wón l'ówó ñbẹ



We have all made compromises that have implicated us in the continuing pillage and degradation of the Nigeria project. We are all just as guilty as those whose names we, as youthful idealists, lustily sang about. We have all lost our innocence and became the very things we railed against, and in some cases, we are even worse than them.

I have seen comrades who became legislators, or commissioners rapidly transformed to join the senseless race for personal aggrandizement, and the pursuit of private wealth at the expense of the commonwealth. We have all made one compromise or the other, and gradually become the men that we once condemned.

The problem with Nigeria goes beyond corruption; I will even go as far as to suggest that corruption is not the problem. The problem is impunity, and immunity that comes with the sporadic circuses of corruption that have plagued our country from ages past.

There have been four distinct circuses of anti-corruption in my lifetime: first was during the Murtala Muhammed regime, and before the emergence of Obasanjo after Murtala's death; second was when Buhari came on board after the Shagari government was ousted; third was during Obasanjo's second coming, while the fourth and latest is Buhari's current crusade. All of these crusades against corruption share the common characteristics of being selective, sensational and, ultimately, ineffectual and: failures.

I will not dwell too long on the first. I was not old enough to fully understand Murtala's motivation, and his regime was too short to be objectively analysed as it relates to the



effectiveness or otherwise of his anti-corruption postulations and exertions. But the fact that one of the publicly perceived most corrupt Nigerians succeeded him, possibly doomed whatever Murtala might have set out to achieve.

It would, however, help in the furtherance of this discourse to examine some of the tokenism of the Murtala regime.

One of the earliest actions of the regime was to scrap the badly rigged 1973 census, which seemed to have favoured the North, and was deemed by southerners to have been rigged by the northern politicians in apparent preparation for the proposed civil elections, which was being touted by the ousted General Gowon's regime. This tokenistic gesture won General Murtala Muhammed popular southern support. Nigerians in their honest desire for a messiah celebrated the seeming emergence of one in Murtala.

The next stop of General Muhammad's anti-corruption spectacle was the dismissal of top federal and state civil servants and public officials in an apparent attempt to cut off all links with the ousted regime of General Yakubu Gowon, which had been demonised as ineffectual and corrupt. The people, in dire need for assurances, were entertained by the public spectacle whilst the underlining infection that bedevilled our nation festered. This spectacle continued with trials of some public officials, but all these were short lived because General Muhammed in his naivety and exaggerated faith in his public acceptance and confidence, breached security protocols, which eventually resulted in his brutal murder on the streets of Lagos.



As usual, it was said that corruption fought back.

The demonised General Gowon was fingered in the murder of General Muhammed, an apparent evidence that the seeming purge of the military and public service was cosmetic. The intrinsic system and network responsible for corruption were still very much in place and, remained part of our substructure.

The tokenisms of the General Murtala Muhammed's era was totally reversed in the subsequent eras of General Obasanjo and the kleptomaniac Second Republic government of President Shagari, which was subsequently removed by *coup d'état* and replaced by the Buhari-Idiagbon regime.

The Buhari-Idiagbon regime followed the abortion of the democratic experiment of the Second Republic, and in an irony of history, the coup was announced by the then Brigadier Sani Abacha, who railed against the corruption of the civilian government being ousted.

In his take-over speech, Brigadier Sani Abacha, as he then was, said:

“You are all living witnesses to the great economic predicament and uncertainty, which an inept and corrupt leadership has imposed on our beloved nation for the past four years. I am referring to the harsh, intolerable conditions under which we are now living. Our economy has been hopelessly mismanaged; we have become a debtor and beggar nation.

There is inadequacy of food at reasonable prices for our people who are now fed up with endless announcements of importation of foodstuff; health services are in a shambles as



our hospitals are reduced to mere consulting clinics without drugs, water and equipment.

“Our educational system is deteriorating at an alarming rate. Unemployment figures, including the undergraduates, have reached embarrassing and unacceptable proportions.

“In some states, workers are being owed salary arrears of eight to twelve months and in others there are threats of salary cuts. Yet our leaders revel in squander-mania, corruption and indiscipline, and continue to proliferate public appointments in complete disregard of our stark economic realities.”

This speech signalled the commencement of a new circus of anti-corruption. That government went on to try key functionaries of the ousted civilian government, and several were hauled into jail upon arrest and subsequent trial and convictions for corruption.

The regime was ousted after a few months by General Ibrahim Babangida with full collaboration of General Sani Abacha who, incidentally, announced the Buhari-Idiagbon regime. The Babangida regime thoroughly discredited the anti-corruption credentials of the Buhari-Idiagbon regime, and the inherent contradiction occasioned by the selective nature of its exertions lent itself to those interested in discrediting them.

Corruption came out of its hiding place during the Babangida era. In fact, the face of corruption as we now know it was birthed during the rule of the one that came to be known as the “evil genius”. Before Babangida, corruption was mostly limited to the inflation of contract prices, the



receipt by government functionaries of percentages of the contract sums, and sundry acts of malfeasance. But new facets of corruption were introduced into the polity during the Babangida years.

Millionaires sprang up overnight as a rental economy was foisted on the nation. A booming market emerged for privileges and access. Men and women became millionaires because of whom they know in the corridors of powers, and a pervasive culture of corruption was birthed. It became unimportant to work before reward and quite unrewarding, frustrating, and defeatist to follow the old path to success.

The third attempt at fighting corruption came with the coming of Obasanjo in 1999. By the time he came to power, corruption had become part and parcel of our national psyche. It had become normal after surviving Babangida and Abacha, 12 years of exposure to rabid looting, the decimation and pauperisation of the professional and middle classes and the resultant elevation of existential living had lowered the moral bar, destroyed the societal capacity to rail against corruption and made making a fast buck the norm.

Obasanjo pontificated against corruption and promoted anti-corruption measures. But more than anyone before him, he promoted corrupt practices.

Chinua Achebe of blessed memory told the story of Akweke in his seminal novel, *“Things Fall Apart”*. Akweke was asked to lend his knife to those interested in butchering a dog, he protested that he could not, seeing as dog meat was a taboo to him; he, however, volunteered to help them divide the meat with his teeth!



Obasanjo came out of Abacha's gulag mouthing protestations of Christian conversion and a message of national rebirth and redirection. He set up the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC); he appeared serious about fighting corruption and strengthened his anti-corruptions credentials early on by taking the fight to his erstwhile jailer's family. He made the Abacha family pay back the monies stolen from the commonwealth. The people were regaled with stories of stupendous amounts stolen by the dark-goggled and now departed dictator. In true Roman style, the circus of anti-corruption was well-stocked with spectacles and the occasional hapless victims were fed to the lions.

Sunday M. Afolabi was thrown into the mix to demonstrate how there was not going to be any sacred cows in the fight against corruption. The naïve head of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nuhu Ribadu, was emboldened and encouraged to go after those deemed corrupt by the person of Obasanjo.

But it was all a farce.

Nobody did more to corrupt the system than Obasanjo. In an attempt to have his way, he brazenly bribed the legislative arms of government with all manner of inducements, monetary and otherwise, and corruption was defined solely by what he deemed his own interest.

Under Obasanjo's watch, a minority number of legislators impeached governors deemed unfriendly to his imperial ambitions, and corruption wars were clearly based on the



subjective interpretations of the emperor of Aso Rock. Corruption grew wings under Obasanjo and the anticorruption crusade became a veritable tool for political propaganda. It was thus devalued in the public consciousness.

Obasanjo's anti-corruption circus was better-stocked and managed than Buhari's shop.

Whilst Obasanjo pretended to fight corruption, the Yar'Adua government, itself a product of the corruption of the Obasanjo years, was held hostage by the forces of corruption, as evidenced by the manner it dealt with the master of the Obasanjo circus of anti-corruption, Nuhu Ribadu. The EFCC chairman was hounded into exile when corruption fought back. The Attorney General, Andoakaa, became the Chief interpreter of the "Rule of Law" mantra that defined that government. Full protection was given to some of those the citizens deemed the most corrupt amongst the gubernatorial class of '99.

The rest they say is history.

Jonathan did not pretend to fight corruption. He knew his own moral limits, and corruption grew exponentially during his regime! It must be noted that the gale of prosecution of functionaries of Jonathan's government was not indicative of his own personal propensity for corruption, it was more a result of two facts: the first being the emergence in power of a class that had hitherto been deprived access to the commonwealth at the federal level, and being succeeded in power by a government headed by a man with anti-corruption pretensions.



Jonathan came into power on the back of deals made with the several power blocs in Nigeria upon the demise of Yar'Adua. By the accounts of those who were privy to these arrangements, Jonathan was to stay only one term in office and subsequently vacate to allow a northern member of the PDP power circuit to succeed him. Upon being sworn in, the man "saw reasons" in Aso Rock, (apologies to the departed *Oniirisa* of Ile Ife) and desired a second term. Thus, began a realignment of forces committed to ousting him from Office.

Bola Ahmed Tinubu was a key factor in the actualisation of Jonathan's removal. The success of the plot owes a lot to his organisational capacities and political sagacity, but his involvement also belies the hypocrisy of the anti-corruption posture of the President Muhammadu Buhari regime. How do you fight corruption whilst at the same time embracing, allegedly, the most corrupt face of the republic?

Because of the contemporaneous nature of the Buhari regime's anti-corruption war, the reader has an opportunity to observe in real time the positions being canvassed by this writer, and then form his/her opinion thereto.

President Muhammadu Buhari, the ascetic Fulani general, the one in whom most Nigerians invested their hopes for a new nation, whilst getting rid of the Jonathan government, started his own anti-corruption crusade, but like those that went before him, it's another circus of anti-corruption, and the reasons are quite varied.

I will set out why the war was dead on arrival and what the solutions are in my own view.

The Akweke story is just as relevant to President Buhari as



it was to Obasanjo. President Buhari must of necessity be selective in his anti-corruption war. He owes his emergence to forces quite steeped in corruption and a house divided against itself would fall. Buhari was supported to emerge by Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the man who is claimed as defining institutional corruption more than any politician of his generation, and his campaign was funded by the loots of many who today hold critical offices in his government. What assurances were they given to allay their fears of prosecution and subsequent inclusion in his government?

A popular fuji musician once sang *“Báwo lẹ̀ ’bọ ẹ́’orí... tí ’nàkí ò ẹ̀?”* How is the monkey's head different from gorilla's? How is the corruption of the PDP apparatchiks different from that of APC? How come none of the APC foot-soldiers have been deserving of the Economic and Financial Crime -- Commission's attention? How did Amaechi, Fashola, Fayemi, etc., become immune from the attention of the anti-corruption agencies? How can President Buhari claim to be waging a war on corruption and still find accommodation for these men who were not any different from their brothers and sisters that inhabited the People's Democratic Party?

What is corruption? It is important to define what constitutes corruption in order to appreciate the current dialectics of corruption in Nigeria, and the wars being waged against same.

Corruption is to have been a member of the PDP federal government under Jonathan; to have worked for his emergence as the candidate and to have canvassed support for him. To be corrupt, you must have had some role in the



sustenance of Jonathan in government, and must have worked on his re-election campaign.

The politicians in President Buhari's government, those who have held office before, either as governors or anything else, are very much part and parcel of the endemic corruption tearing our nation apart and the only thing that today differentiates them, from those being persecuted in the ongoing circus, is that having participated in the Buhari project, they have acquired immunity from prosecution.



(VII)

A compromised Middle Class



The Nigerian middle class has found refuge in the pursuit of private wealth by all means

THE middle class in any progressive society is the engine room for the developmental initiatives that propel the growth of such societies. The middle class, almost always, is peopled by the segment of societies that have had the benefit of formal education and exposure through travels. They are the incubators of ideas and ideals.

Unfortunately, none of the above is true about the Nigerian middle class. It is an amalgamation of poorly educated men and women, traders of anything but ideas, political opportunists, pleasure seekers, visionless pursuers of transient pleasures and aspiring thieves.

Years of seeking to survive a hostile economic environment that is unforgiving in its capacity to impoverish those who dare to stand out, have honed survival instincts in a class that should have its fair share of idealists; and have ensured that the mindset of the Nigerian middle class is not any different from that of the lower class. The only difference is that whilst the lower classes are mostly financially impoverished; the poverty of the middle class goes beyond material poverty.

They are mostly intellectually bankrupt and spiritually impoverished.



The Nigerian middle class has come to accept the abnormality of the Nigerian situation, and has found refuge in the pursuit of private wealth by any, and, all, means. The middle class has all but given up on the sort of ideas that have propelled other nations. Upon seeing the failing educational system, the middle class was not moved to demand a renewal of the system or its rejuvenation; it simply, as a class, sought succour outside the existing system. This is evidenced by the surge in the numbers of private schools in the last two decades.

Lagos State is a good example of a national malaise. There are over 20,000 private schools in the state, and less than 2000 public (government) schools. The key reason for the growth of private schools is the failure of the state to provide schools for the teeming population of the state's citizens. But in other climes, the citizens would have made demands of their government, and changes would have been made to ensure that the slide was arrested, but in our uniquely Nigerian way, we solved the problem by looking beyond the government. The business-minded built schools to fill in the gap, and the rest of us send our children to private schools, where they are mostly acquiring ignorance in place of knowledge.

When the political and economic elite fall ill, as is the way of men, they flee to the United States of America, United Kingdom, Germany, Dubai, etc., but the middle class runs to the private hospitals dotting our cities and hamlets. The public healthcare system has all but collapsed and depending on the financial capacities of the sick person, private hospitals have become the first port of call. Only the poorest of the



poor, or those too ill to have a say in their care, end up in our public hospitals.

In the choices we have made as a class, the Nigerian middle class has reflected a complete lack of faith in the State but our choices have also reflected the serial errors of judgment that have contributed greatly to the paucity of ideas plaguing us as a nation, and that is responsible for the sorry state of our country.

The middle-class man sends his wife abroad to have children carrying foreign passports, buys homes in foreign lands, educates his children in private and, or, foreign schools, gets medical care abroad...

The moment we can afford to render the state irrelevant in our lives, we jump at the opportunity. So, every man confronted with the reality of a non-existent water corporation in his neighbourhood promptly sinks a borehole complete with a treatment plant, and becomes his own waterworks. The failure of the state to meet the most basic of its duties to its citizens is thus unarticulated, and nobody is taken to account. If you have 30 houses on a street, you have 30 industrial boreholes -- all glaring indictments of the failure of the State.

The most basic function of the State is the security of the citizen's lives and property. In Nigeria the State has failed woefully at meeting this basic needs, and in some cases, has been complicit in undermining the sanctity of lives and properties. This rise in parallel capacity for securing lives, and properties, evidenced by the fact that every middle class home has one form of private security arrangement, or the



other -- ranging from “*maiguards*” to uniformed private security companies, to privately arranged “mobile police guards” -- bears testament to how the individuals have sought solutions without waiting for the State.

Wherever you turn in our nation, what readily confront you are the glaring evidences of state failures. The failure to provide security, to provide pipe-borne water, good roads, healthcare, schools, electricity.... name anything that should signpost good governance; they are almost all absent without exception. These are, however, not unique to Nigeria; they are the same problems facing every nation that must develop its potential. What is uniquely Nigerian is the way we have chosen to deal with these challenges.

The middle class has to find the capacity to move beyond existential considerations if we are to ever fulfil our promises as a nation. We must imagine a new and better Nigeria, and we must do so, knowing that the foundation of the State must be the commonality and equality of citizenship.



(VIII)

Chop Dodo!
Of silence and abdication



*...the tribes of men who speak truth to power,
and seek to elevate thoughts have dwindled...
their voices silenced*

ONE of our politicians was asked to voice an opinion on the government of the day, and his retort was that “*you don’t talk when you are eating*”. When Uncle Bola presumed to have opinions at variance with that of the Obasanjo government in which he was a minister, Chief Sunday Afolabi reminded him that he had been invited to “*come and eat*”. The Nigerian way is to have your conscience bought, and your acquiescence secured in your own defilement and rape.

As I have aged, and our unique democracy has been deepened, more and more critical voices have disappeared and; the market of ideas rendered defunct. The vicious battles citizens have to fight on a day-to-day basis just to find their daily bread, shelter -- just to live another day -- have conspired to rob us of the capacity for introspective engagement. Reflective analyses of deep issues requiring intellectual exertions have been lost.

In my youth, the newspapers were replete with columnists who forced us to think beyond the obvious; men who invested in finding and disseminating knowledge. There



were news magazines that treated deep issues and were comparable in journalistic ethos with the best from other parts of the world.

We had periodicals, and there were several writers competing for space in the marketplace of ideas.

The Nigerian press has succumbed and surrendered to the system. You can get practically anything published, or not published, depending on your fancy, and your readiness to dispense with the proverbial 'brown envelope'. I once asked a journalist friend what had become of his newspaper. He looked at me and laughed. His retort, "*why do you expect that the press can be immune from a societal affliction?*" He told me the story of one of the principalities afflicting Nigeria: this man runs a chain of media outfits, will not pay salaries; his expectation is that having given you a page as a columnist, you will earn your living from the largesse received by those to whom the columnist checks to prostitute himself, and sell his conscience! I was also told of the systematic corruption of the editorial corps by political godfathers. The press has surrendered its freedom and received its mess of pottage.

They have chopped *dodo*.

As I entered teenage years and my character was taking shape, I was heavily influenced in my world view by the music of my environment; the culture, and the values promoted by these artistic expressions. Popular musicians addressed moral issues, they railed against societal ills. Even though the military was in power, popular musicians -- including Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, Kollington Ayinla and



others -- who promoted the pursuit of fun, also addressed social issues extensively. The people were kept informed, intellectually challenged, and ultimately enlightened and liberated, even with the military jackboots marching around. Fela found a music genre all because he lent his gift to liberating the people. With very few exceptions, our current artistes are products of their time, completely focused on money and the easy life. All you hear when they sing is how much champagne they are going to pop, the size of the girl's physical attributes, and the big cars they drive. When you watch the movies, you are mostly seeing a retreat from critical thinking, and an embrace of idiocy. The Philistines are in full flow, and practically every form of artistic and cultural expressions have been similarly contaminated by the painful loss of introspective capacities. As I watched with despair the reality of our descent into crass materialism, I also saw that religious and traditional leaders have been similarly afflicted and spiritual businessmen and women have become God's spokesmen! The rulers have no need to worry about too many of them ever telling truth to power. The religious and traditional leadership of the country requires just as much reformation as every other aspect of our sick society.

In my youth, and as my views were being formed, I was blessed with a voracious reading habit. I read practically anything in print. I was to be found buying newspaper before I was out of primary school. I was thirsty for knowledge, and everything about the society I grew up in encouraged a quest for knowledge and elaborated it. There were role models in



practically every corner of Nigeria. There was Aminu Kano championing the cause of the poor in Kano. There was Tai Solarin, the irrepressible *Khaki*-wearing socialist that harboured no fears for any of the brutal dictators he lived through. Beko Ransome-Kuti, frail in frame, but with one of the strongest moral voices of his generation. Gani Fawehinmi, fearless and courageous. These and many more men and women that elevated our society with the strength of their convictions, and inspired society to be better than it was, and to aspire for more than mere existence.

In my lifetime, Nigeria has never been more imperilled than it is at this point in its history. But the tribe of men who speak truth to power and seek to elevate thoughts has dwindled; their voices silenced. The painful thing, however, is that the silences have not been enforced by the brutal dictatorships of old, and finding myself increasingly unhappy with our national direction or lack thereof, it became an increasingly difficult proposition to hold my tongue, and pretend that everything is fine. So, I began several conversations over time, hence my inevitable conclusion that silence is no longer an option.

When the scale of our national problem began to multiply dangerously during the Goodluck Ebele Jonathan years, I watched as the Human Rights community, the professional activist class, and the old warhorse, Wole Soyinka took him on, called him out for his incompetence and the pervasive corruption of his reign. I watched as an army of keyboard



warriors assailed him and whittled down whatever was left of his claims to legitimacy.

Wole Soyinka was particularly dogged in his trenchant criticisms of the worst excesses of Patience and her husband, he pulled no punches in defining the clueless one and his band of thieving brothers. The People's Democratic Party and its leadership were thoroughly and rightly flayed for their excesses. But I heard no one say a word about the glaring excesses of the *Alaafin* of Bourdillon. The more trenchant the criticisms of Jonathan and People's Democracy Party, the more I waited for someone to take critical look at the *Jagaban* and his own excesses, but I heard not a word from expected sources that were waxing lyrical about the other band of thieves.

A friend of mine was particularly pained by Soyinka's perceived silence, especially his rumoured closeness to the person of the *Jagaban*. He despairingly concluded that Soyinka has chopped *dodo*! He would not believe that there was any other explanation for the seeming double standard being employed in the analysis of the two sets of thieves. He was heartbroken at what he labelled the ultimate betrayal. I disagreed with him and still do. I have my own theory for Soyinka's silence, or shall we say selective amnesia, and it has nothing to do with *dodo*.

Wole Soyinka rails against injustices and our failings as a people. He has been at the forefront of all the liberation tendencies in Nigeria from before I was born. He worked with governments when given the opportunity to work within the system to effect some of the changes he preached.



He found the Roads Safety commission in then Oyo state, and; established the one that still endures today of the Federal level. When he could he worked collaboratively, and even when he worked with the one who elevated corruption into a statecraft in Nigeria, nobody ever accused him of corruption. He has always lived above board. Blaming Soyinka's silence on his having sold out would be lazy, intellectually indolent, and plain wrong, I have another theory for his seeming silence.

"Ina ku, a fi eni bo oju, ogede ku, a fi omo re ro'po".

The fire is survived by the ashes and when the banana tree falls, it is replaced with a new shoot coming from the stump. At over 80 years, after several battles fought for almost 60 years, Soyinka has earned the right to pick his fights and to pick his friends. He might not have talked in public about the issues some would wish he critiqued, but he also never defended any of these things. He has not stopped others from talking. It is up to each generation to find own voice.

I have come to realise that the capacity to identify a problem is correlative to one's capacity to bring about the changes required. If you don't see the problem, you cannot have its solution. To see the problems, have ideas that resolve them, and keep quiet in the expectation that someone else will speak on your behalf is the very definition of moral cowardice.

Painful as it is to admit, mine is a generation of cowards.

The tribe of those who speak truth to power has dwindled almost to the point of extinction. It is relative to the societal loss of critical thinking.



Instead of waiting for Wole Soyinka, the last of the moral voices, to speak for us, my generation has to find its voice, and become the moral and intellectual compass of this nation that is already becoming clouded by very dark and evil influences. The foundation of a State in which our own children will not survive because they have been raised with ideals that are unachievable in the real world they will inherit, is being laid before our very eyes, with our acquiescence and, sadly in most cases, collusion. And we wait for Wole Soyinka to speak for us!

Cowardice is the defining characteristic of my generation, and that cowardice is diagnosed in many manners:

The will of God. Our propensity to blame our failings on God is unrivalled by any other people. We have retreated into vacuous religiosity in place of Godliness. Where the scriptures clearly show the place of work, and that of worship, we have abdicated former, and in most cases, even the capacity to envision what needs to be done. We then cry that the tragic outcome of our failure is the sovereign will of our ever-merciful God. When we see situations where things have gone wrong, and are clearly the products of failed systems, we shirk our duties to speak; we blame it on God, and insult ourselves more, and then define their elective silence as signs of *dodolisation* of the gods we raised because we would not rise up to our own generational calls to immortality.

Oluwole Soyinka, my apologies for daring to wander about you. You have earned your right to pick your battles and its timing.



CHAPTER THREE

SELF-IMMOLATION

(I)

The Subjectivisation of Truth



*...some people cannot accept they have to help
remove the messiah they helped enthrone in 2015*

THE process of the subjectivisation of truth in Nigeria didn't really fully begin until around 2013/2014. During this period, what is now the APC propaganda machine was unleashed on Nigerians and it gained traction with the creation of a cult of personality. This cult was originally centred on the person of Bola Ahmed Tinubu. It is on record that the Yoruba have always idolised good leaders. This is one of the flaws of the Yoruba leadership system. It started actually with Awolowo but because he was an extremely disciplined man who lived an exemplary life, who was also an extremely intelligent person with a track record of achievements, every subsequent person who presumed to lead the Yoruba always sought to call himself the "Awolowo Reincarnate."

When Tinubu started to assume a larger than life status upon the death of Bola Ige in 2003, what we saw happen



almost immediately was that, given Obasanjo was never liked by the Yoruba, his battle against Tinubu deified Tinubu in the eyes of an average Yoruba person. The fact that Tinubu was the Governor of Lagos State -- the centre of Nigeria's media activities -- and also press savvy, having mastered how to use the Nigerian press since his days as a NADECO chieftain, made it a cinch for him to presume to wear Awolowo's cap, and he began to build a cult of personality around himself.

That became entrenched between 2005 and 2011 when it attained its apogee. At the time the Buhari project started, Tinubu's propaganda machine was deployed behind Buhari; and in order to sell Buhari in the Southwest, his messianic following had to be translated outside the Northwest and Northeast. It had to be brought to the South and that was how we started seeing new pictures of a trendy Buhari.

The propaganda machine unstiffened his image; they started holding him up as the pinnacle of accountability. He was easy to sell. Here was the frugal, ascetic, honest, corruption-free, and stainless Buhari running against a man labelled as sybaritic, kleptomaniacal, clueless, and an incompetent drunkard. We had two identikits. This was the beginning of the construction of the personality cult around Buhari. Over the period of the electioneering, Buhari was repackaged. A cult was sold and you must remember that the people were hungry for change.

We are in a circle in Nigeria. We are back where we were in 2014. There is a desire for change at the moment. The only thing that has not happened is that nobody has harnessed that desire the way it was hitched -- hijacked -- and harvested in 2014. In 2014, the Tinubu machine was available to harness



the desire of the people and it was packaged on the change mantra. If they had adopted Abubakar Atiku, he might not have been so easy for them to sell the change agenda. Atiku, having been part of the system for so long, couldn't deny putting hands in the cookie jar. Buhari was the ultimate outsider and it was easy to rebrand him.

The problem with the clamour for change in 2018 was that the disgruntled political class didn't have an outsider to package. They were faced with a choice between Atiku, Kwankwaso, perhaps Tambuwal, who had left APC and became part of the new coalition CUPP. If they had found an outsider to package, we would have been back exactly where we were in 2014. It is a vicious circle considering you cannot sustain a lie for too long.

Truth, as distinguished from fact, is hallmarked by its constancy. The truth-teller has no need of a good memory. Buhari of 2018 is a repudiation of the Buhari of 2014/2015.

The messiah of 2014 is today's Judas.

But there are some people who cannot bring themselves to accept, they are not beneficiaries of this system and are not stupid. They cannot bring themselves to accept that they were so wrong and that things are so bad that anyone of the people they know to be thieves must be supported to remove the messiah they helped enthrone in 2015.

This reasoning ultimately produced Atiku's candidacy.



(II)

**The Weaponisation of
Poverty and Ignorance**



*Every government interested in the prosperity of its
people seek to eradicate ignorance and poverty*

FEU DALISM is dependent for its sustenance on ignorance, and every feudal system is predicated on ignorance and poverty. When you tackle poverty and tackle ignorance, it becomes impossible to hold a people in an oppressive system. In order to maintain an oppressive hold on a people, the first thing to do is deny them access to knowledge because knowledge is power. This explains the manifest under-education and denial of access to education for a vast majority of people, for as far as you can imagine, in the Northern part of Nigeria. This mindset has now been imported into the West.

While I was growing up with my grandparents in Ibadan, I started my primary school education at Saint Stephen's Primary School, Inalende. You didn't need to know anyone to be placed in a primary school. It was based on your locality. Children were assigned to schools closest to their homes so the school is within walking distance. There were no school buses. Saint Stephen's Primary School was directly across the road from my grandparents' house but the quality of instruction that I received in this school is comparable to what



anyone in any of the Montessori schools of today had, or even better off.

When it was time to proceed to secondary school, I wrote a merit-based test -- the Common Entrance -- and; was elevated to Fiditi Grammar School in my mother's village. I gained admission into this school on my performance at the Common Entrance examination. I had also been given admission to Federal Government College Ilorin, but I chose Fiditi Grammar School because my family had a history of attendance in the school. My two uncles had been there before I. Some of my teachers in Fiditi came from as far away as Canada, Ghana and other interesting places.

This was a provincial school in the village!

At the school, we had recreational and sporting facilities such as soccer pitch, hockey ground, basketball and lawn tennis courts. There were more Boarding house students than Day students. The school itself was set on vast hectares of land and, that was the typical standard of most schools within and outside of Ibadan metropolis. The quality of the teaching staff was better than what obtains in the expensive schools my children attend today.

There were expectations and students didn't need to beg the government for admission or provision of enabling environment. The standards were high and strict and everyone had to adhere exactly to the requirements. Afterwards, I left for Olivet Baptist Grammar School for my A levels. These were all public schools and I received good education from them.

Instead of us improving, we have regressed.



If a man went through that kind of rigour and was taught and instructed by qualitative teachers, how can the mind be anything but ready to raise questions and demand answers from those who presume to lead?

The situation is no longer the same.

When you have taught a man to think and have equipped him with knowledge, it is unlikely that he will be poor. Today, I'm a lawyer and a farmer. The only reason I have gone into farming is because my formative schools were situated in rural areas and I could see the value in farming because I have been educated to create values.

As long as you are not stealing, create values and by so doing, you create wealth.

An educated man is freed from poverty.

In my time at school, people were taught plumbing, metal works, carpentry; there were technical colleges. Where are these facilities in today's public schools? They are all gone. It is all because the system is weaponising poverty. The same schools I attended in those days, how many of my type can they produce again? Who is teaching the students there now? Obviously, the best teachers are not going to be found in those schools.

We have created a system that doesn't impart knowledge, and that is the beginning of the weaponisation of ignorance. Furthermore, we weaponise ignorance when the press is compromised. A tarnished press will only print the news



sanctioned by its patron. The censorship is not even one that would need to come from a censor's board; it could just be that the editor has received the infamous 'brown envelope' and consequently, wouldn't bring himself to publish anything injurious to his paymaster.

This is the beginning of the danger of the one-sided narrative, an adjunct of the weaponisation of ignorance. If you have corrupted the news pool; the one-sided narrative comes in full glare. When it comes in, ignorance is enabled. At this point, you see people sharing lies and broadcasting falsehood on WhatsApp, sharing lies on Facebook and all sorts of untruths and abuse. There are social media groups that boast of thousands of membership but only a handful of such members are ever active. The administrator of such groups becomes the ultimate warrior, who decides what to be posted to the group and whatnot.

This is the process of the weaponisation of ignorance.

Weaponisation of poverty will be touched, in a way, when I briefly talk about my driver from Meiran in one of the upcoming chapters.

Poverty is weaponised the moment avenues for the creation of values are closed up to those who are not part and parcel of a system. It becomes a potent weapon in a rentier economy that empowers only those who are part of your system. If I am not part of your system I am constantly struggling just to exist; struggling to find what to eat, what to drink, struggle to pay rent and school fees, struggle to get to work, struggle to get back home, struggle to stay alive and all manner of existential preoccupations.



You cannot create wealth if you are constantly struggling to survive.

When I speak about weaponised poverty and ignorance it suggests that both were always there but have been turned weapons in a class war.

Every government that is truly interested in the prosperity of its people seeks to eradicate ignorance and poverty. These are cardinal principles for any true government. But when a government does not exist for the people its quest is not for the eradication of any of those above, but for their enthronement and enhancement; when your policies constantly increase the poverty level of the people. It is incontestable that poverty has been turned into a veritable weapon for limiting the capacity of the citizenry.

Again, when programmes of the government do not seek to liberate its people from the shackles of ignorance, but instead foist it on them, it is weaponised. So, when I speak of those two, I am speaking from the viewpoint of aggregating the net effects of the policies of successive governments in Nigeria.

It is in an atmosphere where the people are uninformed that someone like Bola Tinubu can continue to succeed. If the people were not ignorant, they would have demanded accountability from him by now. Ignorant people are not ready to engage or subject a key decision to rational debate. Anything they are told is just fine.

Napoleon is always right.

Stomach infrastructure can only thrive in an atmosphere of ignorance and poverty. When we talk about stomach



infrastructure as presently deployed, we speak about giving the people food; the most basic of needs. It shouldn't be the responsibility of government to give people food. The government is meant to create the enabling environment for the people to seek their daily bread. They shouldn't be perceived as being in a giant orphanage with a need to be spoon-fed on a daily basis.

This approach is vastly counterproductive.



(III)

Dialogues of Ventriloquists

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... the pursuit of existential living has decimated the intellectual capabilities of the middle class.

VENTRILOQUISM is the science by which an artiste projects his voice through an inanimate doll.

Whilst the knowing and conscious adults are fully aware of the ventriloquist's shenanigans, the children laughing at the oft-outlandish actions and words of the ventriloquist's dolls are, by the simplicity of their thoughts, mostly blissfully unbothered by the questions of what is real and what is fantastical. As far as they are concerned the doll is the one talking; the ventriloquist uninvolved.

The Nigerian ventriloquists are a breed apart; they are male and female; they are the very humanization of the biblical "principalities and powers". They speak all of our nation's languages, and come from all of her tribes. They utilize living dolls, fellow citizens that they have weaponised with poverty, which is itself layered upon ignorance.

Poverty of the sort incurable by money, and ignorance of the specie certified by diplomas and degrees!

A rather dangerous game is being played by the ventriloquists in our midst, and whilst I have avoided speaking before the completion of my tomes, I am compelled



by the urgency of the moment, to help the generality of our people, who appear as toddlers at the ventriloquist's show; hypnotised and unable to differentiate between the ventriloquist and his dolls. Some of the contributions that I have read online tell me that otherwise intelligent men and women are also becoming stupefied by the ventriloquists.

Some ventriloquists were at work at the Arewa House in Kaduna recently. They purported to issue a Quit Notice to the Igbo living and eking out livelihoods in the northern part of Nigeria! The dolls speaking for the ventriloquists are humans, they are visible, they are Nigerians, they are not "unknown Fulani herdsmen", and the crimes they have committed are not unknown to the State and its law enforcement agencies.

Immediately after the dolls had their says in the hallowed chambers of Arewa House, the 'golden boy' who would be president in the future, made his first move; he became more Catholic than the Pope. He was issuing orders for the arrest of the ventriloquist's dolls, and the hapless victims of the ventriloquist's shenanigans, began to hail the Daniel that came to judgment in Kaduna. *Abi, una think say na only Fayose recognise the political capital of supporting Ndigbo?* It doesn't hurt El Rufai, who cannot protect Southern Kaduna indigenes, to make righteous noises condemning messengers and, in the process, cloak himself in borrowed garbs.

All hail the defender of Igbo interests and rights!

Professor Ango Abdullahi, eminently qualified to be referred to as an elder statesman (Nigerian style), has laboured to take credit as the masterful ventriloquist for whom the credits for the Kaduna show is due. But I ask that



we look beyond the old degenerate in search of the real ventriloquists, and in this search, I ask that the following be factored into the equation:

Some months ago, when the 'disappearing Saint's illness began to take its toll; and in the absence of credible information as to what ails the old man, a dangerous rumour began to gain currency in the northern part of the country. It was to the effect that the saintly one had been poisoned by a variety of persons and interests. It is just as well, that God spared him to return to the country alive; for only God knows what might have become of southerners living and working in parts of the north, and the extent of the retaliatory attacks that would have followed.

At a point in 2018, there were talks of politicians trying to get soldiers to stage a coup; and of arrests of soldiers, followed by denials and exhortations to perish any thoughts of coups, delivered by no less than the *Jagaban* himself, his imperial majesty, the *Alaafin* of Bourdillon!

When you take the fact that in none of the several situations highlighted above has anyone been held accountable for their words and actions; and you add the fact that the same State that contrived Nnamdi Kanu's definitely draconian bail conditions, has stood aside and watched as he (Kanu) has flagrantly flouted these same conditions -- calling for a successful shutdown of economic activities in the East, and is now being responded to by the ventriloquists up North, you must wonder what exactly the ventriloquists have planned for us, the hapless audience; and if they coordinate their acts?



I am of the firm opinion that the Nigeria State is worth saving: that I would rather be a Nigerian than a citizen of the 'Republic of *Oodua*'; that the Nigeria State, as currently structured can deliver nothing good to those trapped within its borders; that the nepotistic foundations of the current structure assure its eventual collapse, and, finally, that it is easier and more profitable to work for a redefinition of the Nigeria State than to acquiesce to the inanities of the ventriloquist's games.

The Nigerian middle class may be likened to the adults at the ventriloquist's show. The assumption is that this class represents the most conscious stratum of society -- better educated, more informed by reasons of travels and exposures, and consequently better empowered to reason. Unfortunately, whilst poverty and ignorance have been weaponised to silence the lower classes, the pursuit of existential living has decimated the intellectual capabilities of the middle class. Nobody is telling the children the truth.



(IV)

The Thinking Thieves



...a lot of people assume offices...and never had any need hold themselves accountable to the people

THE foundational nature of our problem has conditioned leadership to be a function of thoughts, reflections and, or reflexes. Reflexively, we have had a lot of people assume offices just to steal and never had any need to account for their responsibilities; or hold themselves accountable to the people. The people do not reflexively hold them (office holders) to account for their dealings.

Thus, over time, we have evolved two principal sets of leadership in Nigeria. There is the leadership of the western part, which is predicated on the philosopher-king type like Awolowo, who derived the legitimacy of his rule from relevance of his policies and governance style in the life of the people. The people themselves crowned him king more or less; and whether it was in Action Group (AG) or United Party of Nigeria (UPN), or even the Alliance for Democracy (AD); for those who inherited his mantle, the validity of their rules has always been established on the relevance of government to the life of the people.

In this part of the treatise, I am not really keen on focusing on what transpired in the First Republic. My interest would rather touch upon the formation of the AD. When the APP/ANPP was being formed in September 1998, I was at the



Eagle Square, where I was counselling a friend, Prince Ademola Adeniji Adele (deceased), that wherever the *Babas* were going, he should follow suit because, they -- the *Babas* - - would inevitably determine the political future of the Yoruba nation. Whatever they would tell the Yoruba people is what the Yoruba people would do, and that the Yoruba are not going to follow any party that doesn't have the supports of the *Babas*.

When I said *Babas*, I speak definitely of the Afenifere leaders. The AD evolved out of the old Awoist hegemony, and when you trace its evolution you will find that it specifically canvassed for votes in Yorubaland based on the track record of the Awolowo political dynasty. They were the ones who legitimised the aspirations of those who ran on the AD platform.

Between 1999 and 2003, given the fallout of what had happened at Ibadan during the presidential primaries where Chief Bola Ige lost to Chief Olu Falae, fault lines developed within the AD, and, in the course of what happened, most of the governors sided with Bola Ige. With Ige's murder in 2002, and the rout of the AD in the elections of 2003, Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT) inherited what was left of the Alliance for Democracy and created his Action Congress.

When I speak of the “thinking thieves” and the “unthinking thieves”, the foregoing, I believe, sheds ample light on when we can begin to track the trajectories of the “thinking thieves” in the country.

Under Tinubu's leadership, a culture of “thinking thieves” evolved in Yorubaland where people under the pretext of



Awoism, raped the commonwealth in an unprecedented manner -- under a so-called progressive governance!

Between 2003 and 2007, Tinubu developed a political platform that was only progressive in protestation but mirrored the worst of pilfering that was visible under the PDP leadership.

I call them the “thinking thieves” and the “unthinking thieves”.

Whereas, the PDP never claimed to be anything other than what it is: a political association of people who are in politics solely for self-aggrandizement; the AC/ACN under the leadership of Tinubu pretended that it was a progressive socialist, welfarist and egalitarian platform. However, this was only so in name.



(V)

Yeye Rolling...
Thinking Thieves vs Unthinking Thieves

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*...same people that have betrayed the dreams
are usually same we ask to define the
revolution that we seek*

THERE is absolutely nothing original about the caption above. It became part of Nigerian linguistic landscape since *Abami Eda* (Fela Kuti) made it a refrain to one of his compositions. I recently happened upon an epiphany as to why Fela might have come to the painful conclusions that he obviously did, at the height of the frustrations that must have led him to pen the lines of the song.

The more things appear to change in Nigeria, the more it remains the same. The unfortunate thing is that the quest for survival -- materialistic, and existential living -- has reduced the tribe of those capable of telling themselves the truth, and society has become the worse for it.

Upon the realisation that Sani Abacha could not be allowed to continue in power, and Abiola too loose a canon because of the radicalisation born of incarceration, and at a point by which the system had become manifestly unsustainable, forces that had possibly never cooperated were forced into strange alliances. The product of that alliance, with varying levels of complicity and knowledge, was the convenient death of



Abacha followed in quick succession by that of MKO.

Other manifestations include: the speedy, nay, hasty transition programme of the Abdulsallami Abubakar regime, the predetermined registration of Alliance for Democracy and the "Power Shift" arrangement that produced Obasanjo.

The common thread in this story has been the sickening predictability of the cycles. The same people, who have done more than most to betray the very dreams that we always profess to seek to birth, are usually the same to whom we hand the task of defining the content of the revolution that we talk about but always outsource to others to bring to pass. Unfortunately, you cannot outsource labour pains if the child to be birthed is to come from your matrix and be your own.

'Project Change' brought the Buhari regime. The obvious colourlessness of the Jonathan years, the determination of the traditional power elite to retake the hems of power, the embarrassing levels of governmental incompetence and drift, alongside myriads of other issues made up in propaganda or truly earned, had made it impossible for Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to win a credible election. But 'Project Change' meant different things to the different parties to the project.

The Nigerian people know that their country had been hijacked by a bunch of shameless, clueless, thieves -- the very worst of the class. They would vote anything but Jonathan; but more than most, Obasanjo and Tinubu realised the need for a candidate that would have the moral authority to make it impossible for Jonathan to rig without the risk of a popular revolt. Buhari as the candidate of 'Project Change' is probably the only thing about which these two men have ever agreed.



Because of our penchant for seeking to outsource the painful part of any process, however, not enough people bothered to ask the crucial questions; and those of us that asked were largely ignored. Why would Obasanjo or Tinubu seek the kind of changes the Nigerian people were seeking? Could these changes be accommodated within the system as it is? Exactly what about these promisers of change -- their known history -- should have made anyone believe that they share the aspirations for change borne by the average Nigerian?

The undertaker cannot be the healer. And the allegory of the Axe as the king of the trees comes to mind.

When asked to comment on the political parties before the implosion of the People's Democratic Party, I was fond of describing them as the "Thinking Thieves" and the "Unthinking Thieves". No prize for guessing which is which. The thinking thieves had arrogated sainthood to themselves whilst being just as corrupt as their unthinking cousins; but their deft management of the press and intellect capacities against the manifest kleptocratic incompetence of the public faces of the unthinking thieves, reinforced their progressive pretensions.

The "Thinking Thieves" and "Unthinking Thieves" have common purpose, and it is agreeable to each other; hence the speed and ease of "carpet-crossing" in our polity. It is the Nigerian people, whose declared visions for their country, stand at variance with the known dearth of vision of both sets of thieves that ceded the path to the change it requires to the known godfathers of both sets of thieves.



Obasanjo and Tinubu -- very strange bedfellows!

This strange alliance of weird bedfellows: Obasanjo and his gang -- an amalgam of interests ranging from his military constituency to the traditional power elite that lost power in the Jonathan years, Tinubu and his gang -- the shareholders of Action Congress of Nigeria plc and President Muhammadu Buhari, was inevitable because the system has constrained it so. For Jonathan to be pushed out of office, the people must be sold nothing less than the revolution that was marketed to them, and a mass-based movement must be simulated. The public narrative and discourse were expertly crafted, shaped and driven.

President Buhari, the ascetic soldier, whose public persona is of a strict disciplinarian with zero tolerance for the sybaritic lifestyle of the Nigerian elite; who had ruled Nigeria, and had run thrice before in the face of the obvious hostility of the power elite and maniacal support of a maddening crowd of Nigerians -- ranging from the uninformed to the romantic; was press-ganged into the race to take out the ambitious Atiku. The Nigerian people were left with the clear choice between an incompetent Jonathan, and the Messianic Buhari.



*“Blessed are those, who do not hope
for they shall not be disappointed.”*

Chief Bola Ige, of blessed memory, offered the aphorism above, I believe in response to a question regarding some policy of the Abacha government. Taken outside context, it would stand in antithesis to the Christian profession of faith, but when viewed in context against the known antecedents of that government, the otherwise heretical words are infused with profound wisdom. Obasanjo, Tinubu and the bulk of those who promoted 'Project Change' were always aware that nothing would truly change.

Recall, we started this talking about Fela's obvious frustrations with the system. I also got to the same point I was frustrated with the obvious predictability of the sequence and outcomes, and it was in that frustration that I elected to stay out of the madness being whipped up by the change exponents in 2015. But unlike the frustrations that inspired Fela's song and Ige's response, mine has only led me to examine the fundamental basis of the Nigeria State, the presumptions of democracy and the guiding principles and visions of the states.



(VI)

Mythicising 'The North'

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*Caught up in the web of existential living...
no one bothers to think beyond the moment...*

THE greatest lie in Nigerian political lexicon is the phrase, "Northern Interest". Southern Nigerians have bought into this lie, and with the lazy acceptance of this facile thesis of a homogeneous North, we have held millions of our fellow citizens captive in the hands of the common enemies of our motherland.

Pray, are the Kataf of Southern Kaduna -- the same ones being slaughtered like dogs under the watchful eyes of the able governor, and likely Caliph of the Nigeria State -- part of this motley crew that speak in the name of "Northern Nigeria? What about the Berom and Angas of Plateau, the Tiv, the Egbira, the Jukun, the Tafawa Balewa of Bauchi... -- are they part of that North?

To bring this home, I'll share a factual anecdote. Some young politicians of Northern Nigeria extraction were with a friend of mine at a point, and they were teasing one another. The gentlemen ribbed my friend; they reminded him that if the day came when a discussion would be had concerning Nigeria, it would be the like of Gani Adams that would speak for the Yoruba nation, and not my friend, with his *dogo turenchi!*



As Gani Adams presumes to speak for me, and the *Jagaban* leads my people; Nnamdi Kanu speaks for the Igbo.

The abdication of the duty of leadership is the greatest of the flaws that have come to define the Nigerian middle class. Caught up in the web of existential living demanded by the rat race into which we've all become locked, not many bother to think beyond the moment; and unconscionable powers have become absolutely corrupted by the collective silence of those who should be demanding an account.

I am sure that there are men and women of goodwill in the Northern part of our blessed nation. It is time that they found their voices. As for those of us in the South, the time has come to free ourselves of the handicap imposed by our wilful and collective ignorance. There is no Northern Nigeria, except as defined by geography. The vast majority of what we know as the North would rather stay Nigerian. And they would prefer a true federation in which all the citizens are equal. There is nothing that the silent supporters of the Biafran ideals desire that is not beneficial to the Gwari of Central Nigeria.

Southerners do not know what it means to be 2nd class citizens. The Northern minorities are acquainted with being dehumanised. Only a few seem aware that slavery remained legal in the Northern part of Nigeria until 1946. When they hear the Gani Adams and Nnamdi Kanus of this world speak asinine about the Balkanisation of Nigeria along the indolent and simplistic tribal lines that they are wont to do, they must wonder how long the fetters would abide, even as they are forced to cling to the superiority they hold over their Southern kinsmen, who are in truth, the third layer of



citizenship in a nation not unlike a sinking ship. It is time to silence the ventriloquists by wising up to their crafts.

For how long will Jacob speak in the voice of Esau?
I'm asking you to awaken from your slumber. Silence the ventriloquists speaking for us all, and let us commence the dialogue that should redefine our blighted land.

Nigeria is worth saving.



CHAPTER FOUR

THE BUHARI METAPHOR

(I)

A Virus Unleashed



*Corruption festered because the system was
always designed to promote corruption...*

MUHAMMADU Buhari had run for the presidency of Nigeria three times before eventually winning it at his fourth trial. I voted for him when he ran against Obasanjo; I voted for him when he ran against Yar'Adua; and I voted for him when he ran against Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the first time. I could not bring myself to vote for him in his last race, which he ultimately won.

Buhari ran on the premise of anti-corruption and national reformation in his first three races. He was uncompromising in his speech against corruption, and he offered hope that a government led by him would not be business as usual. He was radical in his refusal to find political accommodation for the many evil men who had run this country at several levels; he appeared to understand the extreme poverty of ideals that has kept our country down. And in spite of the knowledge that he failed to connect with the populace because of his



demeanour and lack of communication skills; the likelihood of his failure and the quixotic simplicity of his views did not stop me from voting for him.

By the time Muhammadu Buhari was running in 2015 he had evolved as a politician. He found accommodation for the same evil he had hitherto railed against. Akweke not only offered his teeth to divide the dog meat, he would even masticate the meat for those whose teeth were too weak to effectively chew it.

Buhari is the Ali Baba in the fable, and just as I always wondered as a child, I wonder more, even now: show me your friends, and I I'll show you the kind of person you are; OK. If Ali Baba is not a thief, what fellowship does he enjoy with forty thieves?

By 2012, not too long after Goodluck Ebele Jonathan won the presidency in his own right, the man without shoes began to alienate the very forces that coalesced to bring him into power. He, lacking political intelligence, dared to hold opinions at variance with that of '*St. Mathews of Owu*', the all-knowing *Ebora* of Owu with the monopoly of wisdom. Jonathan became the hostage of his crew from the Niger Delta, brought the like of Alamieyeseigha, Clark and others whom Obasanjo had little time or love for, within the power vortex of Aso Rock; and began to discount the political wisdom of '*St. Mathew*'. God turned the wisdom of Ahithophel Obasanjo into foolishness before Goodluck Ebele Jonathan.

That was the end of the second term he sought.

If Obasanjo was in Jonathan's corner, the *Ebora* of Owu would have begun planning his re-election almost before his



swearing-in ceremony. Obasanjo has superintended the manipulation of some of the most fraudulent elections in the history of Nigeria. He plays to win, lacks the finesse to care whose ox is gored, understands the powers of the Nigerian presidency better than any living Nigerian, and would have guaranteed Goodluck Jonathan's re-election. But those the gods would destroy they first make mad.

Goodluck Ebele Jonathan lost the election the minute he lost his patron saint.

The people of the Niger Delta were always the pawns in the power games played by the power and economic elite of the Nigerian State. They produce the bulk of the nation's wealth, see very little of that wealth as a people, and have very few genuine voices of concerns speaking for the impoverished mass of the people who call the Delta home.

More than most of the other regions in Nigeria, the political actors of the Delta are mostly self-serving, avaricious, and intellectually indolent, and this explains why you will find the best examples of the Nigeria contradictions in the Delta: the poverty of private wealth stares you in the face all over the Delta. Extreme poverty juxtaposed against obscene wealth. With Jonathan's ascension to power the worst that the Delta has to offer moved into Abuja, and the traditional power concentric were left out in the cold.

Power changed hands, and the orphans of power began to plot their comeback.

By late 2012, the spate of bombings by *Boko Haram* had intensified, and the process of defining Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as incompetent had begun in earnest. With the alienation of the traditional power elite, Jonathan began to fill



the vacuum with those who had no understanding of how the system works. A system designed for the benefit of a particular class had fallen into the hands of people outside of that class, and who had little understanding of how to operate the system they had happened upon.

Corruption festered because the system was always designed to promote corruption, but the capacity to keep up appearances had been lost with the ouster of those familiar with how the system works. The situation is not unlike one in which a loaded gun is given to a toddler as a play thing! Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and his merry gang proceeded to pull the trigger on several occasions.

The first “credible” voice against Jonathan was Tinubu, the *Jagaban* of Borgu, and de facto leader of the then opposition in Nigeria. Tinubu inherited the rump of the Alliance for Democracy, which had been routed ruthlessly by the *Ebora* of Owu in 2003. He is a pragmatic dealmaker, unrestrained by morals and, or ideology; he has emotive intelligence beyond the comprehension of most of his peers, and courage and street smarts unrivalled by anyone of them.

I was told a story concerning the *Ebora* of Owu, which I am inclined to believe is true. Though I cannot verify the truth, it bears testimony to the brilliance of his political instinct. At the peak of his problem with the *Ebora*; Tinubu was prevailed upon to make peace with the then emperor at his Ota farm; he was told that all he had to do was play the Yoruba game of deferring to the elder; that once Obasanjo



had been pacified, and peace reigned between them, the withheld local government funds would be released.

Tinubu, I was told, played along and did travel to Ota, but that once at the meeting, and in front of the gathered conclaves including revered Obas and elders of the Yoruba race, he (Tinubu) proceeded to upbraid the *Ebora* in very strong terms, calling him all manners of unprintable names, and walked away from the meeting! I was told Tinubu later called or visited most of these peacemakers to explain why he did what was contrary to the assurances he had given. He believed that making peace with '*St. Mathew*' would portend great dangers to his person!

Obasanjo is defined by his incapacity to forgive, and those who presumed to make peace with him in the past have mostly lived to regret it. Ask Atiku; talk to Audu Ogbe; the *Oyi* (Chuba Okadigbo) is no longer around to tell the tale.

Tinubu survived him.

Bola Ahmed Tinubu had built a monstrous franchise in Lagos, and after cutting the different deals with Yar'Adua first, and then Jonathan in 2011, coupled with the extension of his franchise into other Southwest states and Edo; and, his narrow loss of Ondo State, he was the major opposition leader of the Nigeria State. It was a role he revelled and grew into with gusto.

With the 2015 elections looming, a political realignment began to take shape towards the end of 2012, and the Action People's Congress was born in February 2013. It is a child born of opportunity and convenience. Tinubu was faced with



the task of retaining his hold on the Southwest states, and easy as this would now seem in the rear view of time, it was not such an easy task at the time. Years of Tinubu's sovereignty over the affairs of Lagos State have birthed little by the way of substantive or tangible progress. The state that laid the golden egg had become rotten to its very core with abounding examples of prebendal initiatives and burgeoning corruption.

The Bola Ahmed Tinubu franchise operates on a principle not unlike a limited liability company. There are wheels within wheels, and the governors are branch managers ultimately responsible to the *Alaafin* of Bourdillon.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Lagos State, where because of proximity to the seat of power at Bourdillon, the governor is even worse than a branch manager. Fashola functioned not unlike a senior prefect, and his cabinet was not his own to run. There were different levels of shareholding in the Bola Ahmed Tinubu franchise, and the citizens were the least important part of the system. Stupendous patronage occurred to those in the inner circle, and sybaritic living became the exclusive preserve of members of the inner circle.

The Nigerian press, not being immune to the economic realities of the Nigerian condition, embraced the fact of existential living; and the massive corruption being marketed as progressive governance did not attract the attention of any of the many critical journals domiciled in Lagos. Stories abound of editors on the payroll of the Tinubu franchise, whose brief it is to kill stories that may be deemed



embarrassing to the franchise. Several glaring cases of governmental malfeasances were ignored and the manifold failings of the corruption went unreported.

Self-censorship became the order of the day.

The Bola Ahmed Tinubu franchise became the model of progressive governance in Nigeria. In the country of the blind, the one-eyed became king. Tinubu and his acolytes preached about progressive governance, and pontificated about democracy whilst pursuing several anti-people policies that do not deliver any benefits to the people, and the *Alaafin* of Bourdillon brooking no opposition to his dictations within the empire he built.



(II)

Buhari is Not to Blame? Really?



*... the State has become impotent, complicit;
incapable of ensuring the protection of the people.*

MY heart is heavy. I would have loved to be able to shed some tears, self-indulgent as this may sound; perhaps, it would have afforded me some relief. But the tears have refused to come.

In the absence of tears, I resorted to doing the only thing I know how to do; the only thing that has offered me some measures of peace. Writing.

I have always been blessed with the gift of the writing, but I did not know how therapeutic I could make my gift until the dying days of GEJ, and Buhari's emergence left me so constantly traumatised that I began to write; from the depth of my pains.

Several events in recent days have left me even more traumatised than usual. I have been to the precipice of depression, and I have stared down despair. I lashed out with blurbs, little captions that pushed out thoughts, and demand for the readers to use their God-given brains to think about the path along which our country is headed.

The slaughter on the Jos Plateau is the most recent of the events threatening my sanity at this point in time. Senseless slaughter of our fellow Nigerians is nothing new in our country. These killings have been going on for over 10 years.



The killings did not start with the ascension of Buhari to power.

What has happened with Buhari's ascension is the defence of these killings, either wittingly or unwittingly by functionaries of the state.

The single most damaging consequence of the alliances that created the APC is the concession of the Tinubu propaganda machine in the service of the Buhari project. The Nigerian press is just as corrupt as the police, and just as corrupt as every other expression of our national life. With Tinubu's patronage, the institutionalised corruption and putrefaction in Lagos State has for years been deodorised, and Lagos has been held up as the model of good governance.

This propaganda machine today works for the Buhari government.

Let us imagine that Buhari does not have access to Tinubu's network of compromised press, we would have been reminded of his well-documented utterances during his visit to Lam Adesina at the Government House in Ibadan in the wake of the farmers/ herdsman clash in Oke-Ogun. The government would have had to explain the unsavoury and patently callous remarks of the Minister of Defence, and Buhari would have had to explain his impotent and provocative demands that the people of Benue be their brothers' keepers!

The Inspector General of 'Politics', sorry, Police (Ibrahim Idris) would have had to explain why he did not obey the presidential directive to relocate to Benue; the service chiefs



would have long been rightly excoriated for what was either their snivelling complicity, incompetence, or both.

But today, I witness a country where the State has become impotent, complicit, and totally incapable of ensuring the protection of the peoples trapped within her territories.

I have no empirical basis for the conclusions I have drawn as to the complicity of Buhari and his government in these killings. But the circumstantial evidences are humongous, and the buck really must stop somewhere. We were told in the early days of Buhari's government to read his body language. Well, I have read his body language, his utterances, those of his appointees, the actions and inactions of them all, and the inescapable conclusion is that our president is responsible for these killings. He is the president, and the chief security officer of Nigeria. He owns this.

I hold Buhari responsible for these killings.

May the blood of the innocents haunt their killers, the supporters of their killers, and the ones, who by their silence, energise and enable the continuation of this madness. Amen!



(III)

I love Buhari



*...the ruling class, as long suspected, is
mostly peopled by a bunch of reprobate
thieves...*

J.UST for the sake of clarity and in order to place the point in perspective, I did not vote for PMB in 2015; I didn't buy into the illusion of his messianic purpose. His signals were clear for the discerning; regardless of the posturing. It was going to be business as usual. What kind of changes or crusades against corruption could you reasonably expect when the compromises made to gain power had already ensured that nothing would change?

Every system is designed to produce a desired end, and the only thing systemic in our country is blindness and, its many fruits, corruption merely being one of several. The system coalesced around the person of Buhari because he was the only way for the “*shitstem*” to replicate itself; even as he was the very candidate that the system had worked the hardest to prevent from getting into office.

Without Buhari what could they have done? Another four years of GEJ would have led to economic collapse, and possible popular revolt. The people would not have discriminated between the different bands of rogues. But I love Buhari.

Without Buhari, the illusions would not have been shattered. We wouldn't have known that Tinubu and



Obasanjo are capable of agreeing on any subject, and the lie that corruption is the culprit for our national underdevelopment and atrophy would not have been revealed.

I love Buhari.

The hypocrisy of the ruling class, and its double standards would not have been revealed without Buhari. I see the moral somersaults of a government struggling to explain to the citizens: how come some people have immunity from corruption, and some are the very definition of corruption.

Yet I ask, "*báwo loḅo ti se orí, tí 'Nàkí kò se?*" How is the ape's skull different from the gorilla's?

Because of Buhari, I now know that the ruling class, as long suspected, is mostly peopled by a bunch of reprobate thieves, and the military brass are no different from armed robbers.

When will Buhari probe Buratai's Dubai holdings?

I love Buhari.

I see otherwise eloquent men and women struggling to explain the difference between six and half a dozen; striving to explain the double standard that has always been the hallmark of governance in Nigeria. How many of our politicians, whatever party they may belong to, haven't done exactly what Saraki has been prosecuted, and is his prosecution really about fighting corruption?

I love Buhari.

Because of Buhari, the glaring contradictions of a corrupt system that preaches anti-corruption, whilst in the grip of the most vile of corrupt persons is daily played out in the full



glare of our people, and illusions are shattered. Because of Buhari, it is becoming increasingly clear, that there isn't a magic bullet for Nigerian problems.

I love Buhari.

You can tell me all the reasons why you love PMB and his merry band of reformed and unreformed looters, but be assured that I loved them all before you fell in love with them.



(IV)

To my *Buharist* Kindreds...



The challenge of the revolutionary, is to find the key to the mobilisation of the indifferent...

I POSTED the quote above some time ago. *Facebook*, the unrelenting gatekeeper of a fading memory, by-product of my existential life as a Nigerian, and a very natural consequence of the years I have lived, brought back the memory, and I reposted the quote, but I have also matured in my thoughts on the subject to the point where I must reexamine my original hypothesis.

The would-be revolutionary wastes time if he focuses on the indifferent. It is unengaged, and the revolutionary wastes valuable time in a venture that guarantees only meagre return. The would-be revolutionary is ordinarily a believer in a cause, and wisdom demands that he should go after fellow believers. A believer converted with truth is not only a believer; he is a zealot.

I want to convert the *Buharist*. Zealots are required for the task ahead.

The *Buharist* is a patriot. He is a true believer in Nigeria. He is not a tribalist, not a religionist. Pastor Tunde Bakare illustrates this point. You will find Igbo *Buharist* but the Yoruba



ones are the intellectual mouthpieces of the movement. The *Bucharest* is disgusted by the serial failings of the Nigeria State, and he wants radical changes to the way the country has been run by the unthinking and sybaritic thieves of the PDP.

The *Buharist* is, however, to be distinguished from the *Buharideen*. This distinction is of extreme importance, if the reader is to grasp the truth of my current exertions. For the *Buharist*, Buhari is the best way out of the mess we are in as a country, but he is not the only way. For the *Buharideen*, Buhari is the article of their faith. You cannot reason with the *Buharideen*, he is incapable of rationality, once the person of Buhari is involved in the equation.

To the *Buharideen*, Muhammadu is infallible, a god to be worshipped. His support for Buhari is birthed in the cauldron of ignorance, religion, hatred, and fear. He is the essential *akiń din` din` rin` -akiń danidań í* of Yoruba folklore. Whilst he is a zealot, he believes in nothing. He is little different from a zombie, and a sane person forfeits his sanity, the moment he presumes to reason with the *Buharideen*.

The *Buharist* is ordinarily a thinking being. His position is mostly informed by his desperation. He sees the State struggling to survive; he had watched the country recklessly asphyxiated by the myopic gathering of thieves in the PDP; he heard as Buhari railed relentlessly against corruption; he remembered the War Against Indiscipline of his youth, or was told the tales, and he watched as Buhari became more puritanical and Spartan, even as the PDP carried on with an undisciplined orgy of vile consumption, and contemptuous disregard for the  people.

The *Buharist's* resolve is strengthened by the systemic closure of every other avenue for the ventilation, and articulation of the grievances of the oppressed citizenry, and the garrisoning of opinions into two farcical schools -- one the same as the other, even as they pretend to be different.

Buhari became the only avenue for an imaginary change, and the conscious outsourced the revolution that their visionary clamours for change truly represents.

The APC, a product of an unholy alliance of the political franchise owned by Bola Tinubu, the Buhari rabble, and the traditional power levers of the original PDP became the party of the long disenchanted dreamers, who had for long held the belief that a Buhari presidency would cure the problems of Nigeria, which in their considered view, is directly linked to the cancer of corruption. Buhari will fight the evil of corruption that is hobbling Nigeria, and we would all live together happily ever after!

The worst thing that has befallen Buhari is the electoral victory of 2015. With that victory the capacity to rhapsodize is lost, and the lies told in pursuit of victory have only served to show that Buhari is no different from any of the other persons that have either sought or sat in the office before him. Buhari is just another Nigerian politician, what is different with him is the wilful self-hypnotism of the *Buharist*.

How has Nigeria changed under Buhari? I do recall that the current regime was marketed to the Nigerian people as a departure from the ugly and wicked past. Change was the mantra, and the product was Candidate Buhari. He was the new old broom, and he was going to sweep the Augean stables clean. *Kwarapshon* would be fought to a standstill, and *kwarapt* people  would be jailed.

Naira was to be placed on steroids, and petroleum subsidies were fraudulent diversion of public funds. The question that the *Buharist* has to answer for himself is: what has changed?

This is the point where the *Buharist* is stumped and left floundering. Intellectual indolence, and weaponised ignorance -- the sort that feeds the unaware and stupefied, with the fallacy of a lack of choice -- conspire to narrow the *Buharist's* view, and thus constrain his options to a false choice between six, and half a dozen.

The disingenuous and defeatist argument about the difference between the APC and the PDP would then commence, and the presence of '*Saint Buhari*' in the APC would be the reason for their continuing refusal to believe the evidence of their own senses. They would even theorise, rationalise, and explain Buhari's serial beatification of crooks such as Musiliu Obanikoro, Godswill Akpabio, and many others.

And yes, Buhari will fight his friends in his second term. You'll see Obasanjo and the other thieves in jail in Buhari's second term, they would rhapsodise. What they have refused to acknowledge is that the APC is the PDP, and the PDP is the APC.

The *Buharist* is a believer in a false god.

But there is nothing to be gained in victim shaming. The *Buharist* is a victim above every other consideration, and a failure to take this fact into cognisance robs every analyst of the critical fact that must be part of any objective analysis of the *Buharist's* complicity.

The true *Buharist* desires a truly accountable, equitable, and just Nigeria; he has ideals that he desires for his country; he wants the good  of the majority of

our country men and women. He is angry at the sleaze and malfeasance that undergirds the governing systems of our country. The problem is the person in whom they have invested their hopes, dreams, and aspirations for Nigeria does not share their passions and, or, dreams.

For Buhari, the purposes of power are less altruistic. For a clue into Buhari's real purpose for seeking power, find pictures of his visit to Dapchi, in the immediate aftermath of the mass kidnap of the girls, and you will understand how the man who sought power so assiduously has been completely bereft of any purpose to his exertions after almost four years in power! It is the pomp and circumstance of the office that has bewitched Buhari since his days as the military imperator. It is why Buhari is in, truth, a hostage of power. It is why it was the Buhari-Idiagbon regime, and it is why Aisha (his wife) should be taken seriously when she speaks of, and, points at, the cabal in the presidency.

Buhari left office in 1985. He came back in 2015. I was 17 years old at Buhari's first coming, and 47 at his reincarnation. I voted for Buhari in every election he contested since the beginning of this *demon-cratic* experiment, except the 2015 election. I believed in the myth and was a card-carrying member of the *Buharist* brigade. I barely escaped co-option into the cult of the *Buharideens*!

Such was the rabidity of my support for the illusion that is Buhari.

The *Buharideen* is a zealot. He shares his zealotry in common with the *Buharist*, but that is the only point of commonality



between the two set

of Buhari supporters. You may have an intelligent discourse with the *Buharist*, he might conclude by refusing to consider the possibility of another person doing it better; the *Buharists* might even agree with you on the basis of superior argument that Buhari has made avoidable errors, but you have assigned yourself a Sisyphean task if you seek to reason with the *Buharideen*. He had divested himself of the capacity for thought, and critical analysis the day he joined the personality cult of *Bubu* and was required to donate his brains. Buhari can do no wrong, and nobody aside from Muhammadu Buhari has the integrity to save Nigeria.

As we approach the dawn of the 2019 elections, the Buhari presidency is no longer an unknown proposition. Buhari's capacity for governance, his integrity, and incorruptibility, or otherwise, are also not to be presumed; the records may be brought to light, and a dispassionate, truthful, and fact-based analysis made by anyone in pursuit of the truth.

This now is the purpose of my evangelistic treatise to my Bucharest brethren.

I seek to expose the fallacious basis of your faith in an unfaithful man, and to thereafter ask you to join in the real task of imagining, envisioning, and then birthing the Nigeria that you truly desire, and which desire has led you into believing the lie that is Buhari, and then proceeding to disbelief the serial evidences of your own eyes and senses in order to continue to preserve the illusions of a Buhari



messianic purpose for a state that has stopped making sense.

The central plank of *Buharism* is the oft-repeated lie that corruption lies at the root of Nigeria's retardation. Buhari's public persona, and his entire political life, and brand are built on a carefully cultivated reputation and image for probity, and personal discipline. Not for Buhari the excesses of his predecessors in office on his two appearances in power.

He had been preceded in office on both occasions, by uncommonly avaricious regimes, and he was removed at his first coming by a man, whose tenure did more than any other to normalize, and then institutionalise stealing as a Nigerian way of life. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida -- the 'Evil Genius'.

Buhari's second coming was preceded by the reign of locusts.

It is easy to blame Jonathan for the systemic normalisation of a man whose records, in and out of office, should have alarmed any thinking person, but the truth is that it is easy to forget that what the APC marketed was a civilian coup, an illusion of change, fuelled by the general frustrations with the untamed stealing of the federal government under the PDP, and the propagandistic powers of the AC, which has corrupted practically every critical medium of information, and whose malfeasance had been largely ignored.

The Tinubu political machine consists of the thinking thieves, and the flagship of the franchise, Lagos State, a gilded sepulchre, next to the incredible and obvious rots in the other states. Tinubu is the progressive, and all other thieves and crooks. Tinubu and his cronies in the press, and from the press shaped the narrative, and Tinubu was dressed in Awolowo's oversized clothes and shoes. To worsen matters, they wore for him, the late sage's  spectacles but the

problem is, he is incapable of sight with his borrowed glasses. Corruption is the blinker that has limited his vision.

At the dawn of the 2015 elections, every progressive minded politician in Yorubaland had been corralled into the smaller and insignificant parties, or as with the like of Jimi Agbaje, forced into the PDP, a platform that had been damaged beyond repair in the Southwest since the days of Obasanjo, and the 2003 political *tsunami* that installed PDP governors in all states in the zone, except Lagos. Tinubu's political machinery, and his stranglehold on the Nigerian press worked to normalise what when examined, is an incredibly silly lie: Buhari as the change agent.

Buhari's alliance with Tinubu and the resultant APC cured me of any illusions I had invested in Buhari as a change agent. The years spent in power by the PDP, after the halcyon days of Obasanjo had shown me the limitations of the Nigerian system and revealed to me the existential danger that Tinubu's hegemony represents to the progressive politics of the Southwest in particular, and the entire country in general.

I could see the prebendal nature of his politics, the corruptive nature of the powers he wields, and the way in which he was moving the Yoruba farthest from the progressive principles that had laid the very foundations of our existence and interactions with the Nigeria State. This alliance made me take a second look at Buhari. I have laid out my thoughts on the point of departure in '*Do not Die in their Wars*'.



I will close by asking my *Buharist* friends: to which Buhari are you looking for hope, the one you know is physically and mentally infirm, and who looks to Osinbajo for painful guidance, and help in public, or the one that Osinbajo defers to, after the ones Aisha referred to as the Aso Rock “cabal”? The Buhari pre-2015 would not have had anything to do with the Maina mess; nobody would have linked him with a Babachir Lawal; there's no way that you would have imagined Buhari endorsing and advertising *Gandollar*-Bank. The many sickening examples of stealing under this post-2015 Buhari, without even considering the entirety of the report card, should be enough to alarm any thinking being.



PART 1

SECTION 2



CITIZENSHIP & THE POLITY



FORENOTE

Are the Citizens Complicit?

6

*Today's church and mosque in Nigeria...
nobody is preaching justice anymore...*

IN the course of my sojourn over the years, I realised to a very large extent that saying the Nigerian citizens are complicit in the prevailing structural breakdown would be tantamount to  victim blaming.

Just as we must learn to master the truism in the expression that things are not always what they seem; I enjoin we have in abundance an inquisitive mind with which to probe beyond the apparent. However, to make progress in this direction, there are two ways to look at the issues: One, we need to examine the implication of the word “complicity,” which in effect is consciously electing to be part of something or a system as the case maybe, in this context. Complicity can be active or passive.

Active complicity: when you strive to become a part of the beneficiaries of the corrupt system, which aptly can explain the cliché “if you cannot beat them, join them”. What often happens is, the person joins in order to benefit from the corrupt system.

Passive complicity: a person becomes complicit by his passive acceptance of the situation. For instance, a man who passively accepts his lot simply because he has accepted religion. The religious system is also complicit in the suffering of the people. If the church is preaching compliance with government rules and obedience to the ruler without preaching justice, it means, as obvious as it seems, the church is helping to condition the minds of the oppressed to accept his oppression almost as if saying, “God is the one who has brought the oppression”. They preach and tell people that every government is ordained by God and, it is right that we must obey our rulers without qualifying the fact that we, the masses, also have a duty to resist bad and unjust rulers.

You could sometimes be excused if you began to imagine that Martin Luther King Jr. was not a Baptist Minister. His resistance had its roots in the Baptist Church. The Southern Baptist Leaders'  network was

available as platform from where he launched out to the whole of the United States.

Today's church in Nigeria is complicit in the emasculation and enslavement of the Nigerian people; so also is the Mosque. Nobody is preaching justice anymore. Everybody is preaching obedience.

When we talk of complicity, we should understand that it has different levels.

Before you can make an informed choice as to whether to accept or refute something, you must have the information and must have reasoned it out in one way or the other. But when a man has been robbed of the capacity to critically evaluate the situation and then take a stand as to whether or not he accepts that situation based on objective reasoning, then, we cannot say he has accepted the situation or that he is complicit in the outcomes.

Here is a typical example. I once had a driver, and this is the reality of everybody in his class. He was living at Meiran, somewhere after Abule-Egba on the outskirts of Lagos. I was staying at Chevron on the Lekki Peninsula at the time. The driver would leave his house by 4:45am- 5:00am to be at the bus stop. If this schedule was not adhered to, he would fail to show up at work for the day. He closed at 6:00pm but would not get home before 11:00. He worked Mondays to Saturdays. What time did this person have in which he could ponder his situation; and then, educate himself as to what choice to make?

It becomes easier to tell him what to think.



Instinctively, we have always trusted our press. People forget that the Nigerian press is just as corrupt as the Nigerian Police, Judiciary and the Nigerian artisan class.

He turns on his radio and they are telling him that: the best thing since slice bread is Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Tomorrow, Tinubu comes out and says: "vote APC." You think he (my driver) will argue? How can he argue and with what? Not only has he been impoverished, the system has also taken away his capacity for objective thinking. He cannot think on his own, the system helps him think and tells him what to think. He adopts and takes it hook line and sinker. That is all.



(I)

CITIZENSHIP IN NIGERIA



Until we are capable of producing a template, an identity of who a Nigerian is regardless of his tribe, ethnicity or religion, we can never birth a true Nigerian nation

EVERY time we speak of citizenships, we are essentially dealing with nations. Looking at the Nigerian situation, I have always had a problem with the usage of the word “citizens” in relation to a State like ours. Citizenship strictly so defined within a nation or nationality in order to be a little clearer, cannot exist on multiple levels.

When there are multiplicities of citizenship, what it implies in effect is that one citizenship is better weighted than the others. It becomes more or less membership or ownership of a company, where you have preferential shareholders and ordinary shareholders. The man with the preferential shares obviously takes precedence in terms of voting and privilege as members of the company.

If you look at the Nigerian state and its very origin, you will discover that we cannot have anything like citizenship.

In fact, what we do have is membership.

Each person trapped within the geographical enclave called Nigeria is a member of the Nigeria space. That is as far as the commonality of our destinies is concerned. When it comes to the specificity of the content of citizenship -- now, I am using the word  advisably -- you

will find very quickly that some citizens are better weighted than the others. The Nigerian member from Katsina has preferential treatments guaranteed under the constitution when compared to the citizen from Akwa Ibom, for instance.

This is why a Buhari without his school certificate would be admitted into the army, and promoted ahead of his better qualified peers, who come from other parts of Nigeria!

The Nigerian citizen of Osun has his membership of the State or citizenship as it might become different and distinct from the man from Bauchi. Whilst we are all generally referred to as Nigerians, the reality on ground is that our fates and destinies are not the same.

This has agitated my mind for some time and has compelled me to take a second look at the origin of the Nigeria State.

The British founded Nigeria and certainly didn't found the Yoruba nation, or the Igbo nation. They had nothing to say about the Tangale or the Ibibio or the Berom or the Fulani. They met all these nationalities already present in what is today referred to as Nigeria. But if we are going to extend the analogy, we can say that Nigeria is essentially the product of a polygamous father.

Let us take a British man as the father.

The British man like almost all polygamous men has his preferred wife, his favourite wife, and his concubines. For the sake of this comparison, it is apposite to say that the Fulani was the favoured wife. There were other wives.



We must expand our imagination in order to appreciate this argument. You have the Yoruba wife; the Igbo wife; the Ibibio wife.

For the purpose of clarity again, we must extend our mind a little further. Just as there were wives who might be said to be representatives of the major tribes, there were also concubines. These concubines came in different classes; some from the minority part of the South.

When you go up North (another concept to be defined) – because of the past history of internal colonialism and slavery, by the time the British came, there was an existing colonial power in the Northern part of Nigeria. That colonial power was the Fulani Empire.

So, you had the Sokoto Caliphate which consistently raided the Middle Belt region of Nigeria for slaves. There is a long history of enslavement of the Northern minorities by the Sokoto Caliphate. The Caliphate was founded on Islamic principles and as such, it could not in Islamic laws enslave fellow Muslims. The Caliphate was never interested in proselytising or converting what the British called the “pagan tribes” of the Middle Belt -- the Berom, the Tangale, the Idoma, the Tiv, the Jukun and others. As a matter of fact, the “pagan tribes” populated a vast swathe of modern North Central. These tribes became part of the Nigeria State; and by assuming such status without ever becoming part of the Fulani Empire, retained their distinct identities but acquired citizenship on levels lower than the one given to the Fulani.

It was a situation whereby, the 'North' essentially dealt with other parts as if it were one. The myth of a homogenous North has been propagated for almost a century and has only taken the  emergence of

Buhari to begin to show very clearly that the North is not necessarily one.

Like other parts of Nigeria, the North also has other levels of citizenship. Before now, when the North dealt with the South, the latter never made any distinction between the Tiv, the Idoma and the Fulani. The average Yoruba, Igbo or any other Southerner could only see a single advantaged North, and even though most of these people that came in contact with them were from the Middle Belt, the advantaged North never took any pain to explain their identity to the rest of Nigeria because it was beneficial to be so identified. To be a 'Northerner' in the 70s to early 2000 was to be privileged and advantaged.

In dealing with fellow Nigerians, particularly of Southern extraction, the Middle Belt people, including the Christians amongst them, realising it was valuable to be a 'Northerner', helped to perpetuate the myth of a monolithic North. In perpetuating the myth, the advantages accruable to the North as against the South got to them as well. But in recent times, it has become clearer that when that North is alone and, with him/herself, each person understands his/her place in the pecking order.

I refer to the Middle Belt and Northern minorities essentially as children of concubines. It is not unknown that owners of slaves sometimes give their slaves as concubines to their husbands. So, it may be said for the sake of this same analogy, that the Northern minorities -- children of a polygamous father -- were actually children of the slave concubines of the favourite wife.

When you have a nation where each person or member understands that  rights are not equal,

privileges are not even, you have a battle for equalisation of rights. This fight for equalisation of rights is what has given rise to the original sin of corruption in Nigeria. The Nigeria State has nepotistic origin, and in preservation of these nepotistic advantages garnered at independence or pre-independence, what you find is that a man from Osun State, for instance, would rather identify himself as coming from Kwara State in order to acquire some of the constitutionally guaranteed privileges available to the Kwara man by virtue of his membership of the 'Northern' part of Nigeria.

Demand for patriotism is predicated on an assumption of citizenship. If a man isn't a citizen, you cannot ask him to be patriotic for the fact that, it is only a citizen that can offer true patriotism to a nation that has offered him citizenship. But if my primary battle as a member of the Nigeria State is a continuous fight for equalisation of my citizenship with that of other members of the State, it then becomes anomalous to demand citizenship from me.

Why should I serve a nation with my life when the same nation has guaranteed for me only disadvantages by reason of my ethnicity and place of birth? It is only in Nigeria that you consistently see, while filling out forms, requests for 'State of Origin' and 'Local Government of Origin'. The question to ask is: of what importance are these requests? For your information, these requirements are made simply to allocate historical privileges, historical rights and historical disadvantages and advantages, as it were.

So, if you have reserved privileges for someone who is said to be an equal member of the state, you have by the same token reserved and preserved disadvantages to others. Thus, you have  constitutional

provisions like: educationally disadvantaged, quota system, federal character, etc. The nation is not propelled by meritorious considerations but by nepotistic intentions.

That is the bane of Nigeria and it began from the root. Every state only transmutes to becoming a nation when destinies are common and equal. But Nigeria is a collection of nations that have refused to transform into a nation. People retain their tribal identities; and guard them jealously simply because it is the root of everything they get.

Some people obscure their tribal identity in order to lessen the disadvantages already guaranteed to their tribe. As a result, it is not impossible you see an Igbo man born in the North adopting a Muslim name and refusing his true origin. It is not by accident that you have several Igbo ethnic groups located in places like Rivers, Delta and other places, who will deny their 'Igboship' because an acceptance of their nationality only guarantees them pains. It is not unknown that Yoruba people trapped in Kogi and Kwara States routinely deny their Yoruba ancestry because it only assures them pains and disadvantages.

Until the question of Nigeria nationality is clarified, which can only be answered when we are capable of producing a template, an identity of who a Nigerian is regardless of his tribe, ethnicity or religion, we can never birth a true Nigerian nation.

Let me share an experience with you. I was in Abuja with a friend; a gentleman came to see me in my hotel room with a friend of his who  happened to be a

policeman serving in Kogi State; somewhere in, or around the Okene axis. There had been a spate of kidnapping, armed robbery and general gun crimes around the area, and a special taskforce was set up to investigate the proliferation of guns. Not long after, the taskforce had a lucky break. They arrested a group of people with guns. On interrogating them, they confessed they didn't bother carrying the arms across state lines themselves.

They simply hand the guns over to Dangote truck drivers who cross state lines with impunity and without having policemen check them. They then meet up at the trailer park in Obajana, and retrieve the weapons that have been ferried across the state lines for them!

The incident set me thinking, and I asked myself: Dangote would certainly not have intended for his trucks to become courier servicemen for armed robbers and kidnappers. He has certainly, even if only at corporate levels, fallen victim serially of these nefarious activities. But because the Nigeria State has enabled an environment where the man you pay less than N50,000 in some cases is armed and on the road, a secondary economy has sprung up; one in which official roadblocks have been erected on all our major highways. These official roadblocks operate not to detect or prevent any crime, but essentially for policemen to augment their meagre salaries.

In looking at the state of the Nigerian police or state within a State, we must not look at it in isolation. We have to examine it holistically, taking cognisance of the totality of the State itself, and how several layers have evolved simply because the environment has enabled them. If you pay a person as poorly as you pay the Nigeria policemen, and thereby tolerate the corruption in  that entity, you

have directly or indirectly enabled the existence of the madness itself.

The Nigeria police personnel are not different from the Nigeria Custom Services and the Nigeria Immigration Service. Nobody goes to the Immigration office without “shaking body”. It is a function of the need to preserve advantages, and in preserving those advantages, there is also the need to equalise them. If Dangote, for instance, a child of the favoured wife must run his business without interference by the police, it simply means that you cannot stop his trucks as you deem fit on the roads because doing so would infringe on his advantages. If I am a Dangote truck driver and I know that I am immune to the checkpoints on the roads, of course, I will seek to augment my income. Whether that was the intention of the person to whom the advantage has been preserved is immaterial. Everybody is seeking to amplify. Dangote gets his own advantages and I become collateral beneficiary of the advantages that have been preserved for him, and we all become collateral damages in the maintenance of these advantages and disadvantages.

I think the usage of the word 'citizenship' in describing the members of the Nigeria State will continue to generate some confusion. For you to talk about citizenship there must be equality of citizenship.

You cannot have true citizenship in an environment where some citizens are more equal than the others. If a citizen is more equal than the others either by reason of his tribal or ethnic affiliation or by reason of his association with certain persons, what it  simply means is

that you have reduced the opportunities of some other persons.

It is in the quest to equalise the disadvantages that corruption festers. This is why I continually talk about the nepotistic origin of Nigerian corruption. If the roads are even for all, then it becomes easy to enforce the rules. But when the enforcements are not equal, you must always look at the equality of the citizenship itself.

Another case in point: let's forget whether or not the people doing the killings in the Benue, Plateau trough and Taraba, etc. are Fulani herdsmen; let's forget that they are perhaps, 'Libyan importees' as President Buhari would have us believe; let us deal with the issue of criminality. If the people in these areas of incessant violence are truly citizens of Nigeria to whom the president has sworn an oath to protect and defend, why has it been impossible to prevent their killings? Some people are occupying the space vacated by those being killed. Who are they? Are they superior citizens and are the dead inferior citizens?

Therefore, whether there is contestation of space or not, the question to be asked is, why is one competing against the other if the rules are equal, and if the rights are the same?

I reiterate that the reason you see all the madness around today, is because there is no equality of either of citizenship or of membership -- as I would prefer to put it, and because that equality isn't there; the rules cannot be equally applied.

As often happens: over 300 people have been killed in a town; the police would parade about a dozen people, who purportedly carried out the carnage, but you soon found out that those being  paraded are

actually members of the same ethnic group that have just been slaughtered; people who themselves might have lost family members in the killings, and who ultimately were actually seeking reprisals by the time they were rounded up!

Taraba State represents one of the clearest tragedies of our nation today. One of its eminent sons, General T.Y. Danjuma came out and was shouting “*oh, the Nigerian Army is compromised and is actually facilitating the killings of my Jukun people*” in that part of the country! What is conveniently forgotten is that: T. Y. Danjuma is one of the architects of the new Nigeria State that has morphed into what it has become today. He was there at the murder of Aguiyi Ironsi. They were the people shouting “*Areba! One North!*” They were the ones who believed more in the Northern part of Nigeria than in Nigeria itself.

Dealing with persons would obscure the truth, but it is very important that we go back a little in history.

At the dawn of Independence in Nigeria, particularly the events leading to the 1950 constitutional conference in Ibadan, the British officials such as the last Governor of Northern Nigeria, Sir Bryan Sherwood Smith, advised the merging of Northern political clans. There were constitutional guarantees demanded by the North -- (*But always as Friends; Northern Nigeria and the Cameroon 1921-1957*).

One of them was that the number of legislatures to come to the Central legislative body must be equal in number to the combined number of both Eastern and Western representatives. At that period in time, efforts were made by successive



Northern leaders,

particularly of Fulani stock, to ensure that the minority groups in the North never saw themselves as anything but Northerners. They fostered this illusion and it remained in place largely so in spite of the different problems that existed during the years.

During the military years, we witnessed meetings of Northern State Governors of Nigeria. Everything was done to ensure that the North saw itself as a single monolithic entity. Now, in all of these, you will find that in the years preceding the Civil War, and particularly during the war, the core of officers from the Northern part of Nigeria were mostly made up of Middle Belt people. Officers in the like of Joseph Nanven Garba, Yakubu Gowon, T. Y Danjuma, Atom Perra, Ibrahim Babangida and a whole lot saw themselves first as Northerners.

They didn't see themselves as Fulani, Hausa, Manga, Berom but as Northerners. And they helped to perpetuate the myth of a single North. Some of the most notorious and genocidal killers during the civil war were Middle Belt officers. They were particularly violent and visceral in their hatred of the Igbo.

It was almost as if they were out to prove to their Fulani masters that they were loyal to the Northern cause. It was an exercise in attesting their worth and they did everything unspeakable to earn their "Northerner-ness".

The Asaba massacre springs to mind.

It was an opportunity for them to acquire their membership of the Northern clan, more of an opportunity to prove that they were indeed Northerners. T. Y Danjuma never saw the Nigerian Army as being anything but Nigerian even though that might  be a euphemism for

'Northern' until his people became the recipients of the brutality of the Nigerian Army. It was then he began to remember that even though he might be called a Northerner, he is a *Jukun*. For T.Y Danjuma, one of the greatest beneficiaries of the Nigerian Army to suddenly recall that the Army is not after all Nigerian but Fulani, shows how the circle has finally come back in full swing.

One of the errors we have made as a people, especially the Southern part of Nigeria, is that we have always perpetuated the myth of the "stupid Hausa/Fulani man".

To understand the emergence of Yakubu Gowon as Head of State, you would have to go back to the events in the immediate aftermath of the 1966 coup.

Yakubu Gowon had just returned to Nigeria when Brigadier Zakariya Maimalari, the most senior army officer from the North, had just been killed in the coup. This must be viewed in the contexts the myth that was being perpetuated and developed at this time was of a "*One North*".

An indissoluble North!

In his book, *The Siege of a Nation*, General Chris Ali recounted an experience he had with the late *Sardauna* of Sokoto.

Ali had finished school and needed a job, and the *Sardauna* had asked one of the ministers to get him one. Now, this minister kept Chris Ali on a string and made him to keep coming back repeatedly for the job, which he never got. Chris Ali made it clear that he was discriminated against on the basis of his Christian background and the fact that he was



from an ethnic minority in the North.

When the second coup happened, one of the spearheads, Murtala Muhammed, didn't have seniority over Yakubu Gowon. His goal was secession ab initio. Yakubu Gowon was a middle-of-the-road solution by the Northern groups that were actually the ones that carried out the coup. Having killed Aguiyi-Ironsi and having decided to stay within the Nigeria Federation, there was the need to preserve the order of military hierarchy at least, as far as it related to the North. Yakubu Gowon, being the most senior surviving military officer of Northern extraction, superseded his seniors such as Vice Admiral Joseph Edet Akinwale Wey and became the Head of State!

He didn't become the Head of State without a plan.

It was of strategic importance that the illusion of a united Nigeria or at least, a united army could be preserved, and that could not be sustained if they brought a Murtala Muhammed. It was bad enough the Southern senior army officers were bypassed after the murder of Ironsi. Northern officer corps was effectively in charge of Nigeria. In order to preserve Northern unity and maintain esprit de corps, it had to be the most senior of Northern officers that would succeed the late General J.T.U Aguiyi-Ironsi.

Let us also revisit the assassination of Murtala Muhammed. By the time he died, the most senior officer of Northern extraction didn't become Obasanjo's deputy. They had to promote a Northern officer of Fulani stock. He was given a double promotion from being a lieutenant colonel and, thus, was pushed two ranks ahead of his peers so he



became qualified to serve as Obasanjo's deputy.

In fact, all accounts of that time show that it was T.Y Danjuma who insisted that Obasanjo must become the Head of State -- being the most senior officer, and the second in command to the assassinated Head of State. The illusion that Gowon somehow represented evidence of Northern unity, nothing could be farther from the truth. It was real politics at work.

Nations are founded on citizenships and are cemented by the blood and sweat of patriots. This I said deliberately earlier to attempt to break the enigma of citizenship into simple bites so it becomes easier to digest. Allied to this is my cautious distinction between a State and a Nation. We use the words interchangeably but they must be understood in context.

A Nation may exist within a State but when a State exists within the State, then, you are dealing with a failed or failing State. I also explained earlier that there must be a distinction made between membership of a State and citizenship of that State, and I broke it down further to explain that you really cannot speak of patriotism or demand patriotism from a man to whom you have not given citizenship.

Now, the existence of multiple levels of citizenship denotes inequality within a State. If you have multiplicity of citizenship, which denotes inequality within the State, it becomes impossible to demand patriotism from a man to whom you have denied citizenship.

If we may, let us step briefly away from Nigeria. Let's take a visit to apartheid South Africa. The Black South African didn't have the  same rights as the

white South African. How just could it be to demand patriotism from the Black South Africans whom you have denied citizenship rights?

Back to Nigeria. If a citizen of Osun State extraction is denied admission into a university having scored 250, and another Nigerian from Kano or Kwara State, as the case may be, gains admission into the same university having scored as low as 180 or less -- even though they went to the same Primary and Secondary Schools, probably sat close to each other in that exam -- yet, he is admitted while the other is denied admission, how then do you turn around and demand patriotism from the disfavoured citizen?

When it comes to the time to be employed, because of quota system, he, who scored low in the examination, is employed by practically all the preferred federal government organisations in Nigeria and the other is not to be employed simply because he comes from a different state! Yet, they are both citizens of Nigeria!

Or they joined the army on the same day and because of quota system, he, who scored lowest mark gets accelerated promotion; gets preferred assignments; while the other has patriotism demanded of him!

When it comes to battlefield assignments, the disadvantaged citizen is preferred but for JTF assignments and positions to go and "chop," the Northerner is chosen ahead of others! Yet you are asking patriotism of the disfavoured -- when memberships of citizenship are not equal either in context or reality.



The issues undermining the advancement of the Nigeria State are directly traceable to the quest for equalisation of citizenship as earlier observed.

In the same breath, recall that during Obasanjo's years when Bola Ahmed Tinubu created the Local Council Development Authorities (LCDAs) in Lagos State, and there was so much *brouhaha* about Obasanjo refusing to recognise these entities, the general belief was that, this was Obasanjo in his true element. A lot of political commentators said as much. Tinubu himself did a fantastic job of laying the blame at Obasanjo's doorstep. Without presuming to hold brief for *Aremu*, I prod you to remember that today, Tinubu is one of the people who facilitated the emergence of Buhari.

Buhari is in power today but those LCDAs remain LCDAs and have not become Local Government Areas. The reasons are simple. Allocation of funds takes its origin from Local government. Therefore, Kano State which has had Jigawa taken out of it has more Local Government Areas than Lagos State. Jigawa that came out from Kano has more Local Government Areas than Lagos State, yet, the population of Lagos State keeps growing on a daily basis. The Nigeria State -- in order to preserve the advantages that have been reserved for a section of the country -- has made it impossible for states like Lagos to create Local Government Areas so that it doesn't take away the advantages that have hitherto been preserved for that section.

I don't hear Tinubu making noise again about those LCDAs because today, it is the same APC government at the centre that is in power in Lagos State. Obviously, you have a situation where there is a self-perpetuating system that is designed not  necessarily to

liberate or to in any way, shape or form, do anything for the people.

The system perpetuates itself by disseminating lies and perpetuating myths. If the people begin to deal with the specificity of their problems and stop chasing shadows, therein lies the destruction of the very system that we are operating today. If Tinubu would spend as much time talking about the inequalities in the system that have made it impossible for Lagos State to have 51 LCDAs recognised, what would Buhari say? The same Tinubu today cannot find his voice now that the APC government he helped to enthrone is talking about complete aversion for restructuring. But it is easy to blame the PDP for everything that ails Nigeria.

As Fela would say *“the reason for our suffer e don dey show im face to us...”*

If the nature of our suffering is to ever become glaring to us, one of the things that must happen is equality of citizenship.

When there is equality of citizenship, you will have less of a situation where there are more Barcelona supporters in Nigeria than Nigerians. When you say Nigerians, it implies the people that have a shared and common destiny. You will have less Catholics in Nigeria than Nigerians.

What the ruling class has done is that they have broken us into smithereens so you have sectional interest rather than national interest. Today, we have people who are prepared to die for Yoruba interest. We have people prepared to die for Hausa/Fulani interest. We have people prepared to die for Igbo interest or  Edo interest or

Christian interest or Muslim interest because they have Balkanised the people into tiny fragments.

The fact that there is no commonality of destiny and interest, what you constantly see is the minuscule sects and sections into which we have been broken as a people. And these are self-perpetuating myths. We often speak ignorantly of Fulani domination! Which Fulani is dominating who? Is it the poor Fulani man who doesn't have a roof over his head; whose children are not in any school, and whose future is just as precarious as the children of the ordinary Southerners?

The ruling elite purport to speak on his behalf, yet he is just as disadvantaged as the other poor person who is of Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, Berom or Idoma ethnic stocks. Is David Mark a Fulani man? Is Tinubu a Fulani man? But when it is convenient for them to turn around and blame the Fulani for the plights of Nigeria, they do so and will not be incorrect because those who have appropriated the commonwealth have done so in the name of the Fulani man as well.

The problem of Nigeria begins and ends with the crises of citizenship. Take away all the tribal, ethnic or religious subsets and have an identikit of who a Nigerian is, so that the interests are the same, and the destinies are the same; you will find that the bulk of the problems would have disappeared.

Citizenship strictly so defined cannot be parasitic! You can have parasitic membership but not parasitic citizenship, which can only be symbiotic in nature. It is only membership that can be parasitic as a result of the existence of multiple layers of such membership. If we are indeed citizens, it means that one is as  dependent on the

other as the other. But when you have parasitic membership, which is typified by the multiplicity of citizenship levels, you can then speak directly to parasitic citizenship.

Parasitic membership is a situation where one party produces and another party consumes, or, at least, a class appropriates on behalf of the other. The Edo man, the Delta man, the Ijaw man... produce the wealth of the nation and then the man who produces nothing takes the lion share, and, even, he is the one sharing the meat. That is purely parasitic but you cannot speak of citizenship in those contexts.

What you can speak of would be membership because citizenship has been denied. If there were indeed citizenship rights in that space, then, you would not ever have the situation where one would have to appropriate when he has not produced. Every time you see the rights of acquisition and appropriation in the absence of production; it is parasitic and indicative of the absence of citizenship.



PART 11

SECTION 1

SUNDRY
OTHER ITEMS



TRUTH

&

POLITY (II)



(I)

Corruption of the News



...no one would use the health facilities in the State where private hospitals have mushroomed and private schools multiplied

BECAUSE of an effective ownership, and, or, platforms for information dissemination, there were few people able or willing to challenge the claims of Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT) to progressivism. When you juxtaposed his platform against that of the PDP, which was manifestly and unashamedly corrupt, and whose excesses were being daily called out by the propaganda machine and the press outlets owned directly or indirectly by BAT, it became very easy to brand the PDP as thieves and the AC/ACN as progressives.

The record doesn't bear this out.

Nineteen years of Tinubu's hegemony in Lagos State hasn't birthed anything beyond noise, propaganda and poverty. The educational system in Lagos State hasn't got any better, if anything, it has got worse. His reign has brought increasing privatisation of commonwealth. Tolls have sprung up on roads that are barely motorable; private schools have taken the place of public schools; the health sector has all but collapsed, and I very much doubt if anybody who has a choice would use the health facilities in the State where private hospitals have mushroomed and private schools multiplied. Yet, the constant claims are those of being progressive. But you may then begin to ask yourself: exactly what is progressive beyond the stealing?



Therefore, when I talk of the “thinking thieves” and the “unthinking thieves”, I speak essentially to the realities that both sides are undeniably bedfellows. It is just that, when you look at the Tinubu system and mode of stealing, you will find out that, in fact, the loot would be budgeted clearly and then, they would go ahead and rake it into private pockets without doing the work.

The PDP on the other hand, would not even bother to pretend to have budgeted for it. They would sit down and share the loots.

Lagos State has a thousand and one ideas, but they all are geared towards the actualisation of stealing; not necessarily motivated by any egalitarian intentions, or to better the life of the people.

The line between the “thinking thieves” and the “unthinking thieves” became blurred in 2014 when the latter became fragmented. Those of them that abandoned ship, simply found a new abode in the coalition formed between the most conservative arms of Nigeria -- the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). The few thinking ones amongst the PDP thieves, who for reason of self-preservation, jumped ship and the “thinking thieves” of the AC/ACN under the headship of Tinubu, gave rise to a coalition of “thinking thieves” and ethnic irredentists, coming together under the All Progressive Congress (APC).

The situation has not radically changed. The reason you will find out that it was very easy for some people who had hitherto left the PDP to simply go back. None of these political parties is ideologically driven. It is all about self-interest. The man who left the PDP simply went back to the party because there was, is, and,  no material

difference in terms of ideological framework. They are all thieves; it is just a function of which one is the thinking one and which is unthinking and boorish in its approach to self-serving leadership.

In retrospect, APC and PDP are two hands of a leper. Chief Bola Ige it was who spoke about the “five fingers of a leprous hand” and I remember vividly this was at a time we had five political parties during the regime of General Sani Abacha. As leprous as the five fingers could be, the only thing that unified them was basically, their common romance with the Abacha dictatorship. What we, however, have at the moment is that, the two political parties dominating the landscape are barely different from each other. The two hands of a leper herewith, refer to the reality of lack of differentiation between the two political parties. They are mirror images, six and half a dozen and are Siamese twins, principally inseparable.



(II)

Idiocy of the Middle Class



*When you are focused on the mundane,
you are very unlikely to consider
higher ideals of nation building...*

WHAT might baffle my reader is the realisation that Nigeria, unlike most nations of the world, does not essentially have a middle class, or, if ever in existence is outright idiotic. It is just that we like to lie to ourselves since we are often accustomed to adopting foreign terminologies wholesale. There is essentially a Pendulum Class in Nigeria, which implies that, you are either rich or poor or you are constantly oscillating between the two classes.

Even those who are materially wealthy are intellectually poor. The reason you will find that even a minister who has stolen enough to last him ten lifetimes is still motivated into action by poverty. When I speak of the idiocy of the middle class, though it could be extended to include the existential choices that we all constantly make, which are not always influenced by higher ideals, it is almost always about: 'how will I live;' 'how do I ensure that I don't become poor; 'how do I guarantee that I remain economically relevant?'

'How do I survive?'

When this becomes systemic, you find that people who ordinarily shouldn't have existential considerations impede their decision-making processes are unable to help themselves and are still locked into that existential mode of reasoning.



Looking at the Ekiti gubernatorial elections of 2018 as case in point, an appalling situation which will soon be replicated across Nigeria, you will discover how an entire state decided who governs it. Of course, I am sure there would inevitably be some pockets of resistance or opposition, but when you have the majority approaching 80 per cent, it is safe to generalise in this proportion.

An entire state made a choice based on existential considerations. Five Thousand Naira! I am told in some Local Government Areas, as much as N20, 000 exchanged hands. Those were the considerations that shaped the choice the people made.

Amongst the people making these choices were those we would typically refer to as the middle class. There were professionals amongst them; there were teachers; there must have been some mechanics -- these constitute the professionals. But, when the people have been pauperised, and the constant preoccupation is "how do I survive?" as a friend once said to me while quoting someone, "*rationality ends when hunger begins*". As basic as this statement might seem, it is not simplistic when you begin to deconstruct and examine its veracity.

How rational can a hungry man possibly be? And the reality is that this is the ever-present state of the Nigerian middle class. If he is not intellectually destitute or impoverish, he is, in fact, living with the spectre of hunger constantly on his back. We may sit down and be chattering about the logicity and illogicality of the citizens' actions but how reasonable do we  indeed expect the

citizen to be when he is regularly in a state of hunger? The middle class is idiotic, yet we have to examine who exactly is the member of that middle class.

When I use the word “middle class”, I am using it advisedly knowing that it doesn't seem like the one you will find in advanced society.

In Nigeria, you are either rich or you are poor.



(III)

Truth as the Silver Bullet



*...if a man is capable of weaponising poverty,
weaponising ignorance, the truth
may also be weaponised*

IT is often said that “when you want to kill a vampire, use a silver bullet”. Actually, when you understand that the Nigeria State is as bloodthirsty as a vampire, you will then begin to question in your good conscience, how to destroy such evil in our midst. It was at this juncture of truth it dawned on me that the only way we can truly confront and overcome the evil is to tell the unadulterated truth; because, the truth remains the only imperishable weapon the ubiquitous social ills can neither destroy nor withstand.

Long after the truth-teller is dead, the truth told by him lives on. I once had a debate with a friend; it happened that we were both listening to a song by Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, and I quipped, “*Fela is a prophet*”. My friend, Taiwo Akinlami, refuted this; revealing that “*Fela was not a prophet but a truth-teller*”. When I prodded him further to shed light, he rightly pointed out the difference.

A prophet says what will happen in the future based on irrational truth; he examines the situation and says, “*Oh, that person is going to become the president of Nigeria*”. Though, such a person might never even have joined any political party before, might not even have been born yet; the prophet foresees the future and reveals it in the present. What this means is that, Fela  constantly told the

prevalent truth but the society about whom he was telling the truth was impervious to change. Therefore, what he said about the society remains the truth and, because the society has refused to change, Fela's words now acquires colouration of the prophetic when ordinarily it was simply the truth.

After my friend expanded his point thus, I began to have a second view of the man, Fela; and I started to take another look at him.

I have found that Taiwo was completely correct. There is nothing prophetic about Fela. He was just a courageous man who told the truth. Now, if Fela's truth over the years has not changed Nigeria, how would the truth told by any other person, including me, be able to change Nigeria? This is a logical question to ask. My own view is that, Fela told the truth without an agenda. Basically, he said what he saw and, was in most cases, merely reacting to the system.

Evil systems have always thrived on reactions because it is all well and good to rant that: the system is corrupt, Buhari is no difference from a crook, Obasanjo is a thief, and Tinubu is a looter. All of those could be said but are they true? Emphatically yes! What does it change? Nothing!

For every one of you that are calling them thieves, know there are ten others hailing them as messiahs. And, it is the survivor who tells the stories. But if you weaponise the truth, it becomes a weapon the very moment you tell it while showing an alternative to the falsehood it negates.

Accordingly, if a man is capable of weaponising poverty, weaponising ignorance; the truth may also be weaponised.

Hence, when I speak of the truth as the silver bullet, it is the weaponised truth as distinct from the reactionary truth. The weaponised  truth is when you

stand in a place and say: you know what -- the myth of one Nigeria is a lie, and the myth of a monolithic North is a fat lie. Afterwards, you then begin to weaponise the truth by breaking your assertion into bits.

All of a sudden, Samuel Ortom was going to be impeached by a minority number of lawmakers. The people threatening to unseat him were not from Zamfara, or Katsina; they were also Benue indigenes. Ortom, for those who sympathised with him, is a victim of a most rapacious APC government under the leadership of Buhari.

But, here is the point: Buhari didn't take legislators from Katsina to chase after Ortom. It was the legislators in Ortom's own state, right there, that were recruited to do the dirty job. And if Ortom was indeed, fighting for Benue people, would they have found the space to do what they were doing to him? Thus, if you are going to weaponise the truth in such environment, you should look at the nuances and request to decipher the reason such people have gained a foothold. What are the agenda that they are pursuing? Whose script are they acting? What lessons have we learnt from the impeachments in Plateau, in Bayelsa, in Ekiti, and in Oyo State? All under the same Obasanjo.

You will now find that when certain scripts are being acted out, they are not new however spectacular, if you look at them critically.

Something made the condition favourable for those things to be done and until the underlining issue is adequately dealt with, it is like using Panadol for a malaria-induced headache without treating the actual cause. What you get is a palliative; it is only a matter  of time, it will

reinforce. The magic bullet, I repeat for emphasis, is the weaponised truth and not just any genus of truth, as anyone would have you believe. The silver bullet, with which one may slay the evil system governing Nigeria, is the truth.



(IV)

The Stubborn and Unpalatable Truth



*...some person or persons intent on mischief have
bewitched the witch hunters of Aso Rock*

IN the immediate aftermath of the Plateau massacre, the news wave and blogosphere were abuzz with statements credited to a man named Danladi Ciroma. He was said to have ascribed the carnage to retaliation for the loss of 300 herds of cattle allegedly rustled in the community where the massacre took place. He was further alleged to have said that the equation remained unbalanced until there are equal numbers of human deaths, for the lost cattle.

A couple of days later, I watched Usman Baba Ngelzerma, the National Secretary of *Miyetti Allah* on Channels TV as he strenuously denied and dissociated his association from the statement purportedly issued by the Plateau Zonal chairman of the association. He declared that Ciroma lacked the capacity to speak for the association; that he spoke what had to be deemed his own mind.

The Channels presenters delivered a coup de grace, they called him on the phone, and the hapless Ciroma was given the opportunity to clarify his alleged statement. I heard him admit talking to the journalist. I also heard him denying that he said the words that were credited to him. The clearly annoyed National Secretary disowned Ciroma on national television, even as Ciroma laboured to deny the statement. Ngelzerma was on other news channels for days, thereafter, diligently  disowning Ciroma.

The corrigendum published by Premium Times, the original platform that broke the news, silenced the critical mass of Nigerians perturbed by the brazenness of Ciroma's then denied outburst, and the truth became clouded, if not lost, in the noise generated by the deliberate and vociferous campaign to discredit and obfuscate the issues raised. That was where we were.

Amongst the Yoruba, there's a tree credited with mythical powers; it is known as *Obo*. It is said that when the bark of this tree is soaked in water, any *Àjé*, (witch, our local *airforce*) that drinks the water will begin to involuntarily and spontaneously, confess her witchcraft, and recount her exploits as a member of the coven.

It is my humble submission that some person or persons intent on mischief have bewitched the witch-hunters of Aso Rock. The bark of *Obo*, has found its way into the water sources of seat of power.

First it was the Defence Minister, who told Nigerians that the terrorist herdsmen would cease killing the very people he swore to protect, if the anti-grazing laws of the states of Taraba and Benue are abrogated. The Inspector General of Police soon echoed the defence minister, and not long after, our incorruptible president was quoted as asking that the mourning people of Benue should be their brothers' keepers'.

If Danladi Ciroma was indeed misquoted, pray, was Femi Adesina also misquoted? Femi speaks for the government and Buhari; what he said was thematically linked to what each of the others had said: Give up your ancestral home and land, that you may  preserve your lives!

The rights of the cows and their owners are superior to those of the Nigerians that they are pretending to serve.

Let those who will be confused by the evidence of their own senses continue in their solidarity with the lies of Buhari, but let those with ears, digest the truths being told by this government. Time was when all we had to go with was the body language of Buhari and his men. These days, they're speaking loudly, and the truth is coming out unfiltered.



(V)

Power Corrupts...

6

*... the very first step is to constrain powers
of the State by raising institutions;
and diminish powers of individuals...*

FIRST came into contact with Lord Acton's quote, I believe during my father's spectacularly failed attempt at remediation of my insufficient O' Level credits, when he sent me to Olivet Baptist Grammar School in Oyo to study for my A 'Levels, whilst also rewriting my O' Levels. A story for another day.

How I made an A1 in Government at O' Levels remains a mystery, but I somehow convinced WAEC I was worthy of an A. So, Government it was, and a couple of other Art subjects for A Level. At some point, Lord Acton's quote stuck in my head. *"Power corrupts... Absolute power corrupts absolutely."* Nigeria has proved this declaration beyond even the most liberal of doubts; and Acton's declaration was a truism for me, until I was schooled by a man with an even heavier burden for Nigeria.

"Power Corrupts!" he said the words quietly, but they were loud in my ears. He argued that the entire quote by Lord Acton could be thus summarised with these two words. The primary purpose of power, he argued, is to corrupt; and that consequently, the madness of the Nigerian environment is directly traceable to the very foundation of the State. The powers of the Nigeria State are not subject to the rule of any law; they are  designed to be the

diktats of men. The law was never meant to rule the Nigeria State as is, rather it is to be ruled by men; we concluded.

The president in his speech at a recent NBA conference wasn't saying anything we did not know already. What he did was to count aloud the digits of an amputee. For those of you making noise about Rule of Law in knee-jerk reaction, check with your conscience; what did you say when your favourite crooks sat in *Bubu's* chair?

As I have watched the Trump Presidential Reality Show, the concept of the rule of law as a bulwark against the rule of men, is being tested out in real time. The president that the architects of the American State, her founding fathers, feared the most, and who the State was originally designed to withstand, is in office!

America's national Interests, however urgent the executive might assert, remain firmly subsumed beneath the rule of law. Nigeria's national Interests, by comparison, remain whatever the president or his appointee says they are. Or so they'd love for it to be, and so it would be; if we kept the peace of the graveyard.

The challenge before the Nigerian is to curb the corrosive and corruptive impulses of the State and its functionaries, but the very first step is to constrain the powers of the State by raising institutions, even as we diminish the unaccountable powers of individual functionaries of the government and its agencies.



(VI)

Truth in the Age of Fake News...



We treat ourselves worse than they treat us, and what they do to us, humane in comparison to how we daily de-humanise ourselves.

TRUTH is the easiest of the definitions I must attempt in the task that I have set for myself. And while the emotional, the unwise and, or, mischievous might have multiple meanings for what the truth is, the divinity of truth demands that if the thing were true, it must be definitive in nature, and unambiguous in clarity.

Constance, hallmarks truth.

The term, Fake News, came into mainstream usage in the age of Donald Trump, 45th president of the United States of America. It is the name by which politicians and world leaders, everyday people, and State actors have come to define any piece of news item, be it based on facts, or not, that they consider incompatible with the alternative facts, that they would prefer to have the public believe.

President Trump has elevated the obfuscation of truth into an art form.

The challenge for those who thirst for truth in the age of Trump, the emerging world order, and who would be wise is to embrace the truth wherever we might have found it. Observe the truth, even as a mirror, and learn the lessons it teaches. Do this, even when the truth comes with pain, and is



told by entities or persons unmotivated by love.

The truth remains the truth, regardless of the vessel of its dissemination.

Shithole countries! That was attributed to Donald Trump by the way. And you guessed right: Fake News, he declared. Our very own stainless 'Saint', standing in the Rose Garden at the White House, declared him guiltless, and our own youth, Buhari labelled as "entitled" and "spoilt". *Sai Baba!* Trump must have *halla-ed*, just before he tagged *Bubu* "lifeless", but for all that we know, just another fake news. We *kukuma* treat ourselves worse than they treat us, and what they do to us is humane in comparison to how we daily de-humanise ourselves.

I was the recipient of a quote attributed to Vladimir Putin, and I was in so much pain, that I had to switch off my brain for a while, so that I might dull the pains I felt.

*"When an African becomes rich,
his bank accounts are in Switzerland.
He travels to France for Medical treatment.
He invests in Germany.
He buys from Dubai.
He consumes Chinese.
He prays in Rome or Mecca.
His children study in Europe.
He travels to Canada, USA, Europe for tourism.
If he dies, he will be buried in his native country of Africa.
Africa is just a cemetery for Africans.*



How could a cemetery be developed?"

I expect Putin to decline ownership of this quote; after all, he has refused to own his ultimate victories over the West. Behold Agent Orange, and the unfolding carnage that is Brexit. Putin has won strategic advantages, and his vision for Russia, very close to fulfilment, and successful beyond his own best expectations. But he has been reticent about owning the works he did in the dark. He might just declare the quote to be fake news; it would be impolitic to own the words, rather like the *Vanguard* man, and his "sophisticated morons."

Let us forget the provenance of the quote for a while. Let us accept that it doesn't matter who uttered the words. Let us together, as rational beings, ponder the message, and forget the messenger. Are these words true? Do they reflect the realities of our lives as a race? These are the questions that should agitate the minds of every conscious person of African origin.

In the world of Putin, Trump, Brexit, and the obviously evolving new world order, the rise of Chinese hegemony, and the conscienceless nudity of Saudi and Arab power, what are the motivations behind the exertions of the black race? Where are our original thoughts? What are the overarching goals of the black race?

It doesn't matter if Trump said it. Putin might very well have been credited with the words of another man, and Buhari might very well be full of life, and not quite the 'lifeless' cadaver of Trump and Kanu's imaginations. But the



search for the authors must not detract from the validity of the truths that they have spoken.

Patrick Wilmot once spoke of the hand holding up the mirror. It doesn't matter if the beholder enjoys the reflection he sees, cutting off the hand that holds the mirror, matters little; the mirror reflects only what it sees. Is our country truly a shithole? And is our continent any different from the cemetery? These are the truthful words to ponder, and the true measures of our tragedies.

Ponder the truth, in the age of Fake News....



(VII)

Big Blind Vision



*Nigeria's primary problem is to have been cursed
with the leadership of very ambitious men,
with little or no vision.*

Wón fì ètè sí'lẹ̀, wón n'pa làpá làpá.

THEY ignore the leprosy; and pursue the cure for ringworm.

One of the enduring words in the political lexicon of the Nigerian nation is “corruption”. I first started having my senses and life serially assaulted by this word while yet in my early teenage years. The politician of the Second Republic tossed the word around liberally, and so did those who galvanised public opinion against bad governance. Everyone, from the corrupt leaders to the Rights crusaders railed against corruption, and; the unanimity of opinions, private and public, is that corruption is the reason our country has been in a suicidal dash for State failure and the Stone Age. I could not disagree more.

I was taught the English language, and I am still a student of the language. But I was born a Yoruba man, and that is the language of my thoughts, and my dreams. I think in Yoruba, and translate or transliterate depending in the circumstances, into the English Language. The Yoruba language does not have a word that may be translated to mean 'corruption'. Yet some of the most corrupt leaders of Nigeria have come from my home...  Yorubaland is just

as afflicted as the rest of the country. Every language is a reflector of the people's customs and mores, and I make bold to say that corruption is alien to the Yoruba culture. That is why we never evolved a word for what is today called corruption in our country.

There have been several anti-corruption crusades, wars and circuses and yet the situation has grown empirically worse. Corruption has become the biggest industry in Nigeria. Every aspect of our national life is corrupt and evidences of the putrefaction caused by corruption abound all around us, and confront our daily existence. We rank pretty high in all indexes adopted for the measurement of corruption. Even David Cameron (former Prime Minister of United Kingdom), also became affected with the intellectual indolence that has led to the mischaracterisation of the Nigeria problem.

Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a man distinguished by his happiness with simple thoughts, came close when he said that our problem is not corruption, but stealing. He was excoriated without attention being paid to his words, or any critical analysis being undertaken. He was right up to a point.

The single reason for our national malaise is visionlessness. A cliché: *"The eyes are useless, when the mind is blind"*. We have for too long been blinded as a nation, forgotten who we are, and oblivious to whom we can be. Our blindness is multi-dimensional and total darkness has enveloped our nation for too long.

Spiritual blindness has replaced Godliness in our nation, and vacuous religiosity has taken the place of true faith and worship. We love God, and our beautiful churches and mosques are altar to the depth and breadth of our love for the Almighty creator  of heaven and

earth, but we hate his creation to the point of appointing ourselves God's deputies, and we kill in His holy name.

We profess the one living God in public but in dark places, we worship at altars that we condemn by day. Some play God and presume to have the powers of promotion and demotion, evil exercises of powers, without authority. Men forget the day of death.

The Yoruba say “*Olówó kan láàárín òtòṣ ì mēta, òtòṣ ì ni gbogbo wọ n*”. We have in our blind pursuit of private wealth, impoverished ourselves. Let me use a well-known example, *Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)*.

Baba Aremu came to power in 1976, I was eight years old at the time, memories of those years have started fading, but I remember *Operation Feed the Nation*. It was always being yelled at you from the transistor radios everyone seemed to have at the ready in those days and when the television comes on for the day around 4.30pm, *Uncle Sege*, in his *khaki* shorts with his hoe nestling on his shoulder, was there to remind you of the virtues of farming. We know how that ended, or has continued till date.

I am now 51 years old (being born in 1968). *Operation Feed the Nation* is arguably the largest and most profitable farm holding in Nigeria, if not in Africa -- mostly retired generals, former governors and foreigners own the closest to it. The Nigerian farmer remains an endangered species, because of a national vision for a true agricultural revolution; what we have had over the years has been a visionless pursuit of private ambitions and greed.

Today, we remain a nation that cannot feed itself.

We import practically everything we eat. I am not talking about the criminal  importation of

expired frozen or embalmed chicken. I speak of basic things like tomatoes, *tatashe*, potatoes, different peppers and vegetables of all types. More than 70 per cent of the protein consumed in our nation is purchased with scarce foreign exchange.

Trillions of Naira. The evidence of the visionlessness of our agricultural exertions is clear for all to see.

I started my education at the *Jelesinmi* at Church Eleja around Queen Elizabeth Road, Mokola in Ibadan. The *Jelesinmis* -- roughly translated as "*Let the household have some rest*" -- are the precursors and forerunners of today's Nursery schools. I must have been around 30 to 36 months old when I was enrolled. I would walk with my slate held in one hand, and a bag or sack made of *khaki*, containing my rag for cleaning the slate and my chalks.

All of us, the 'disturbers' of different households, would walk in a single file, the approximately three kilometres, to the basement of the church where the school was situated. We learnt our alphabets and we began the clumsy journey to whatever laid ahead of us. We all remained there until we were qualified by age to enter primary school.

Primary education was governed by the Free Universal primary Education policy.

The result today is that we have an army of uneducated graduates, products of a system built on blindness, and they are already passing on the same ignorance to the generation they are teaching and impacting.

Òdo tó ñ gbé òdo rá, ignorance is breeding ignorance, and the blind are leading the blind.

Our army evolved as an army of occupation. Its roots and history are not  different from that

of the Nigerian Railways and, or the Nigeria State itself. The railway tracks are the same inherited from the colonial masters, designed primarily to serve the colonial purpose of exploitation, and exportation of the wealth and substance of the colonised. The rail tracks end at the ports and are devoted to the carriage of raw materials thereto.

The State found its amalgamation in 1914, never the expression of the will of its blighted and stunted citizens.

The British, nay the West, wrote the book on corruption. The corruption in the western world is built into the system, and criminologists will tell you that a certain amount of crime is beneficial to the system.

Before howls of derision from Whitehall, and Albany begin to greet my broad assertion, I invite you, my reader to review the life of Mr. Mark Thatcher, son of the late Baroness, Thatcher, iron lady of the British Realm, conqueror of delinquent Labour leaders and the epoch defining Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

Mark made his first significant wealth from Britain's single largest sale of arms; a contract to sell arms to the Saudis signed by his mother in 1985. The *al-Yamamah* deal. He made a rumoured 12 million pounds sterling for what Sir Dick Evans, then head of British Aerospace Companies (BAC) later described in his book as "*...nothing that could be helpful or useful*". Twenty years later the Tory government has refused to allow request for papers that might have shown the clear abuse of office, in defiance and abuse of its own stated guidelines.

The several Wall Street convictions for corruption, the success of Bernie  Sanders in

attacking Hillary Clinton, for her closeness to Wall Street, and the several political scandals that have engulfed America, from the Watergate scandal to the Whitewater enquiries are eloquent testaments to the fact that Nigeria has no patent on corruption. What we appear to have monopolised is collective blindness.

Ambition is not to be confused with vision. Ambition promotes the limited self, and does not see beyond the self. Vision benefits beyond the person because it always transcends the self. Nigeria's primary problem and, or, disease, is to have been cursed with the leadership of very ambitious men, with little or no vision.

If the future of our children, and our nation is to be guaranteed, we must begin to envision what future we see for our children, and our nation; we must move beyond the narrow prism and pursuit of the self to the articulation and pursuit of a national vision built on the promotion of the commonwealth above the interests of the persons, and a subjugation of personal interest beneath identified national interest.

Vision is not to be confused with sight; one within the conquest of human sociology and interactions, vision talks about purpose, about goals, it is the vehicle with which the intangible become tangible, and the strength of the vision channels the powers, resources and capabilities of the *visionary*, to the point where the realisation of the vision becomes an all-encompassing vision for the *visionary*.

There are clear identifying characteristics of *visionary* and vision, and the presence of these identifiers, generally, signposts the presence of visionary leadership.

I was watching one of the foreign news channels recently, Sky, I believe and a  news item caught

my attention. The National Health Service (NHS), the clear fruit of the visionary leadership of the British people, had determined that it requires thousands of new doctors and nurses in the coming decade and, as a result, a debate rooted in ideology but constrained by vision, had led to a government policy which was being announced with support from all sides of the political divide; they would see a spike in the numbers of student Nurses and Doctors being admitted with a glow of incentives to encourage young men and women to consider careers in the health sector.

You will find the same evidence of forward thinking in all spheres of life, where visionary leadership exists, be it in a home, a corporate body, or a nation-State. But forward thinking, which is unaligned to an overarching vision of a better life for the citizenry only, produces the sad corruption that we see all around us.



(VIII)

Up to the Oppressed to throw off the Oppressor



...this political class must not be trusted to determine the content and spirit of the restructuring...

HUMAN history is replete with tales of how nations rose above the limitations of their environments, and, sometimes, their circumstances, to attain their manifest destinies. We are not without options, and our oppressors' greatest weapon is the intellectual indolence occasioned by the all-encompassing poverty that has become our lot in Nigeria.

Material poverty predisposes man to predatory leadership, what dooms him, however, is intellectual impoverishment. We are only truly imprisoned when our minds are bound by existential pursuits such as the rat race the Nigerian is forced to run by reason of our very citizenship.

This awakening is crucial because those who have long held us bound have begun the groundwork for the next phase of our total enslavement, and; if we are not to acquiesce and become complicit to our own rape, we must wake up; arm ourselves with knowledge, and be prepared before they come.

The political and economic elite have all come to agree that the system is broken, and in need of a fix. You would be hard pressed to find any sane Nigerian who would disagree with these conclusions, but this is as far as the agreements go. The substance of the  change sought by

the political and economic leadership of our country differs significantly from the one being sought by the citizens.

"I sit on a man's back choking him and making him carry me, yet assure myself and others that I am sorry for him and wish to lighten his load by all means possible... except by getting off his back."

Leo Tolstoy could very well have been discussing the Nigerian situation. Indeed, it is up to the oppressed to throw off the oppressor. In the pursuit of our emancipation as a people, it is important that we understand the issues, educate those who may not know, be open to unlearning the lies and assumptions we have long been fed; and be prepared to embrace new ideas.

We voted to birth a new country in 1993. The possibilities of that new country were so scary to the beneficiaries of the old State that they, without regard to the wishes of Nigerians of all tribes and creeds, killed it at birth. 'St' Matthews' of Owu was deployed to explain how Nigerians in their millions mistook the signs, and how Abiola wasn't the messiah. He might very well have been right, but we also are comfortable in the knowledge that the *Ebora* of Owu was anything but the saviour.

In place of a new nation, we were short-changed, and "power shift" was foisted on us with the unique incongruity of an unrepentant OBJ -- the main beneficiary of that *wuruwuru*.

We know how that went.

When OBJ realised that he had wasted eight years and achieved nothing enduring, he initiated his moribund tenure elongation games, and it only ended after he was defeated by the will of the  people and the

resolute opposition of the victims of his imperial presidency. Power did not shift from where it has always resided; it remains in the hands of whoever the *shitstem* elects to entrust it with, and the unfortunate truth that Buhari's ascent to power should prove is that until the system is changed, a mere change in personnel will not deliver us to the promised land.

Buhari's candidacy was marketed as the antidote to the madness(es) afflicting our land, and you would have been pardoned if you thought that the messiah had come. After all, 'St' Matthews' joined forces with the *Jagaban* to endorse his candidacy to a people starved of hope by the years endured under GEJ. Only the naive would be surprised that nothing has changed, except the ongoing circuses of anti-corruption that serve no purpose beyond the distraction of our people.

I make bold to say that what the Buhari government is doing is a selective pursuit of perceived enemies; and the selective nature of his exertions belie their true intentions. A ringworm curing exercise at the expense of the leprosy that continues to fester!

That the system has become unsustainable should be glaring to all thinking beings, and the capacity of the Nigerian elite for self-preservation, is unrivalled. The new mantra in our nation is restructuring. The stark choices we have to make in the face of the obvious unsustainability of our current system have made seeming radicals of otherwise sedate and conservative voices. Atiku has talked, Gen. Alani Akinrinade has railed, the brain in Aso Rock has had his say; it is my belief



that the citizens also need to be heard.

Every system is designed to achieve set goals and objectives. The Nigerian system was not designed for the greater good of the greater number of her citizens; it is a system designed to maximize the powers and advantages of a few over the most; colonial in its outlook and in its quest for the exploitation of the masses for the benefits and advantages of a few. Its beneficiaries are Nigerians, and that is why it cannot be called colonialism. Its membership cuts across tribal and religious lines. Tribal affiliations and religion are only dredged up when our colonists wish to divide us in order to conquer us.

The restructuring we must seek is the one that places the rights and interests of the citizens over and above the narrow interests of our political overlords. It is obvious that in the coming winter, we cannot have a governmental structure as unwieldy as the one we currently operate. 36 states, 36 imperial governors, 36 state legislative houses, 36 set of commissioners, and 36 different levels of madness! That Nigeria cannot go on in our current fashion is a self-fulfilling prophecy; but that this political class must not be trusted to determine the content and spirit of that restructuring is also imperative. Indeed, it is the duty of the oppressed to seek his liberation, not the obligation of the oppressor to loosen the chains.



(IX)

The power of Memorials

‘

...the government has been chief culprit in enforcement of selective amnesia...

SO I was watching *Sky News* one morning, and I got caught up in the memorial service being held in commemoration of the first anniversary of the Finsbury Park terrorist attack. In case you missed it, or perhaps do not understand or recall it; that was the attack by a white supremacist on a Muslim crowd as they were exiting the mosque at Finsbury Park -- after the evening prayers during the *Ramadan* fast.

The hateful man drove a van through the crowd, injured 12 Muslim faithful, and killed a father and grandfather. The dead man was named Makram Ali. I have his name ingrained into my consciousness because the living refused to allow us to forget. They have built memorials in his honour, and a plaque has been unveiled at the local playground where he played with his children and grandchildren.

I watched the Mayor of London, the leader of the opposition Labour Party, and other functionaries of government pay tribute to the memories of the dead, and the courage of the living. The British refused to forget. The French president honoured the memory of the policeman who gave his life to save others in the terrorist attack outside Paris; the very day we buried murdered soldiers unsung in Kaduna, whilst the president and governors partied away in Kano. I have been privileged to travel in the Western world, and this refusal to forget  would appear to

hallmark their civilization. Today, however, our own manifest inability and, or, refusal to remember became even more painful than usual.

Why have we become a people stripped of the capacity to remember? I posit that it is because memories are liabilities, when the lessons taught by the memories are at variance with the aims of those in power; and threaten the legitimacy of the powers they wield.

The declaration of June 12 as the authentic Democracy Day has rightly silenced the “liar of Owu”, and the “devil of Minna”. It was designed to do exactly that, and whilst I still believe Buhari to be playing politics, I cannot be happier at the politics that has provided the opportunity to remember because we lose everything that should be gained when we forget, as they had planned that we should.

Selective amnesia has become a national affliction, and the government has been the chief culprit in the enforcement of this national malaise. We forget the dead, we forget their sacrifices, we obfuscate their purposes, we denigrate their memories; the living in their refusal to remember, jettison the lessons that should guide the future.

How many remember the thousands killed in the never-ending terrorist attacks? Why have we no memorials for the innocents bombed to death and handicapped by the Nigerian Airforce in Bama? The several victims of the Nyaya bombing; who remembers them? Why do we always seem in a hurry to forget?

We have become a people that remember nothing but we also forget nothing. The Igbo who were not born until years after the war will regale you with legends of Yoruba betrayal



of their forbearers; the Yoruba will tell tales of Northern oppression; and the beat goes on inexorably.

Lost in the midst of these refusals to forget is the refusal to remember.

Buhari would love that we remember June 12 for Obasanjo's egocentric refusal to remember, and for Babangida's loss of any credibility to speak as a statesman. I am happy to accommodate him on both counts. But I also urge that we remember the day and the struggle for reasons that the powers-that-be would prefer that we forget. The powers of a people united, the unconscionable powers of a rogue State that murdered its own citizens in pursuit of narrow interests; the limits of the repressive powers of the gun in the face of a people determined to be free, and the possibilities promised by a united Nigeria.

Makram Ali died at 51 years, a victim of hate, but his society has immortalised his memory, and retained the lessons taught by his death. What was intended to divide, and a tragedy, has today become a cause for optimism because the people have refused to forget. How many such opportunities have we lost; to remember the lessons taught by events that we have contrived to forget?

The labours of our heroes past have remained obscured in the attempt not to amplify the obvious incapacities of our current dotards, and it is in the obfuscation of this truth that our current retardation festers.

We have a duty to remember.





(X)

June 12 and the aborted Nationhood

6

*June 12 is not about a holiday; it is about
the birth of a nation out of the hotchpotch of
the people held bound by the Nigeria State*

I WAS resident at Adanla Close, just down the road from Cassidy Bus Stop at Okokomaiko. IBB had exhausted the patience of myself and everyone else in my immediate world, we just wanted him gone; tired of his ceaseless schemes and experiments.

He had banned and disqualified all the usual suspects, and up until Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola (MKO) joined the race, the race had become tedious, repetitive, and generally boring. MKO's entry into the race changed all that. He electrified the race, captured the imagination of my generation, and unleashed the latent energy of a people long held bound by a leadership devoid of imagination.

MKO fired our imagination with his common touch; his grass to grace story; his immense capacity for visioning; his unbridled enthusiasm, and his empathy for the common men and women of Nigeria. He lived without limits, and we were enthralled by the strength of his vision. He made us believe that a better Nigeria wasn't a mirage; his personal story was evidence of what could be.

Abiola made believers of us, and we believed.

Moshood Kashimawo Abiola was courageous. We were not unaware of his limitations as a man, we knew he was a beneficiary of the same system that had kept the country hobbled, but  unlike his friends,

he retained his common touch, and whilst his *Ali Baba* befriended all the thieves he had also been the *Robin Hood* that gave unsparingly to the people. We loved him warts and all, and when the day came, we were ready to live the dream that he promised.

In June 12 1993, we awoke to a beautiful sunny day, and I together with other inmates of Adanla Hostel went out to cast our votes. Option A4 was the adopted system. We queued behind our choices, were counted; handed our ballot papers, and I along with a lot of my friends voted for the very first time in our lifetime. The day was a beautiful one, it was peaceful all over the country.

I will not rehash the shenanigans that followed the epochal events of that day. I have dealt at length with the aftermath in my memoirs, and I am also aware that the bulk of what really happened remains shrouded in the many lies that the Nigeria State has spawned to cover the truth. But IBB and his gang did more than the annulling of an election; they killed a nation.

In the battle to enforce the freely expressed will of the hapless inmates of the Nigeria State, I wasn't an onlooker. We were the foot soldiers of the ragtag army of romantics; we were the ones killed in our hundreds by the Nigeria State; it was my generation that the State used as cannon fodders. Abacha was the fall guy for a generation of visionless idiots that, yes, began with IBB, but that number includes the OBJs of this world in its ranks. Uche Chukwumerije must not be forgotten, we must remember the Ernest Shonekans..., the list is long, but our stories must be told.



Some have stood on June 12; others have eaten on June 12; the demagogue of Owu has wiped his dirty *yansh* on June 12; saints have been canonised on June 12, political empires have been built on June 12, and a people have been held captive by June 12. May the spirit of June 12, continue to haunt the killers of June 12, and may Obasanjo, the one who knows who is and who isn't the messiah, become the sacrificial lamb to cleanse the injustices of June 12, and may its ghost never cease to haunt him until his dying day. Amen.

June 12 is not about a holiday; it is about the birth of a nation out of the hotchpotch of the people held bound by the Nigeria State. We remain in limbo because we continue to deny the truth of our reality.

Nigeria is a state that has denied citizenship to her inmates, a denial predicated on a refusal to be just and equitable to all, regardless of ethnicity and or religious affiliations. This is why snakes may dance in Igboland, but the same State will tolerate the pogrom and genocide in the Benue trough and Southern Kaduna.

All animals are equal, but some are more equal than the others.

No Nigerian head of state has done more to undermine the ideals of June 12 better than Buhari, and whilst I thank him for his farcical declaration of the holiday, I assure him that we are not fooled. MKO wasn't elected to rule the Yoruba nation; he remains the only president to have been elected with a national mandate, and the chances of nationhood might very well have been interred with his remains.

I honour the memory of those who died in the struggles to revive the aborted  vision. I salute the

spirit of "*Emuke Moshudi*" (one of Abiola's monikers) and the many buried in unmarked graves, victims of a most wicked and vile State, and I ask the living to spare thoughts for the families who lost sons and daughters in the struggle, but whose losses remain unacknowledged. They can take solace in the knowledge that Nigeria will not achieve nationhood without acknowledging their sacrifices. On June 12, I remain standing...



(XI)

The arrogance of Foolish Knowledge



The middle class has been conditioned to focus on existential issues, to the exclusion of any other preoccupations...

I GOT your attention with the oxymoronic heading for my essay now, didn't I? I enjoy showing off. But the thing is, even as I clown I am also being dead serious. A man may be truly knowledgeable but be unbelievably foolish, all at the same time. Wisdom after all, is to be found in the application of knowledge, not in its acquisition.

I am not blind to the very real and original sin of the like of me, who in spite of knowing the truth, and sometimes living truthfully in their private space, assume their false pulpits -- religious and secular -- rail against the system, but fall short of articulating viable alternatives behind which the people may be united and galvanized.

Guilty as charged.

My current bug-bear however, is to be found with the arrogance of foolish knowledge. I plead guilty to this most foul of idiocy myself, and I urge that you hold yourself guilty in advance. It makes the task of repentance that much easier. If you are a member of the asphyxiating Nigerian middle class, raise your hand.

How can these Ekiti people sell their votes? Shut up! Do you know what it  means to be

hungry? If you once were, do you remember how it felt now? Do you remember the stomach-churning pains? The ones that come from the seeming absence of anything for the worms in your stomach, and being hungry they have decided to manage your innards?

Do you remember?

If you have ever felt, or you can use your privileged education in some elitist past that had included stints in the boarding schools, and hostels of my youth, be that in Nigeria, or abroad, and which must have acquainted you with transient hunger, imagine a father going to bed hungry, assured that his children are even hungrier, and that he'll be happy to pimp his dear hungry wife, a civil servant, just as himself, and neither of whom have been paid their wages in months!

How can the dancing buffoon become the governor of Osun? The guy's certificate is looking even faker than Buhari's, Kemi's, *àti béèbéèlò*. *Sèbí Jagaban* gave assurances that their treasury is too lean to be of interest to his busy eyes? Why would they reject the 'genius' from Iragbiji, the anointed one and favourite of the smiling devil? Can they not see the change that APC would bring? The very same they'd experienced? The years devoured by the smiling locust.

Ebi kì wó ọ'nú, kí ọrò mî wò! Rationality ends where hunger begins.

The long-forgotten Nigerians -- the really poor and the truly wretched -- are increasing in number. Their fathers and mothers are training them. They are here, watching, learning... They're learning how to sell their worthless votes. Votes they've learnt bring no changes to the abject misery of their daily  existence. They are

learning about their country in real time, and with hunger as a tool for concentration.

One of them cleaned your windscreen for a token the other day. You exasperatedly shooed one away. And *gosh*, the snotty-nosed ones pushing themselves against the windows? They're here, they're watching, and they're learning. They'll be better prepared than your kids and mine to survive in the jungle we're building for them.

Are the people masochists to behave as they currently have done? I believe not. I believe that we are actually watching in real life, clear evidence of the resounding success of the weaponised poverty that has been the lot of the Nigerian people, even as legitimate opportunities for class migration are sealed off to the poor, and poverty assured.

The middle class has been conditioned to focus on existential issues to the exclusion of any other preoccupations. In the absence of a national vision, vacuous religiosity abounds. As the State failed in healthcare delivery, schools, security, name it, the middle class has struggled to provide alternatives, and the ones that were schooled in government-owned schools cannot now afford to allow their children in a school system that imparts anything but knowledge.

The poor can see. In the absolute simplicity of their knowledge, they have found the wisdom to be bought. I am sure they'll accept the best price that their impotent votes will fetch in the market. They will do this without the liability of foolish knowledge. They are clear and certain about what they see.

Irú ìró, ni Ìborùn. One is not different from the other; APC *oh*, PDP *oh*, all na one, and all na same. Six, and half a dozen. Your middle class  cocoon insulates

you from the painful realities of the failed State, but while you can afford to believe the lies you have helped entrenched; he lives the truth of the lies you are telling.

Here, an invitation to ponder just a thought. Your darling children, or be it for your selfish self, that you pretend to live; how great does it look, when you behold the future that today foretells? All right; just one more; just how well would your precious ones compete in the Nigeria State, the one they will inherit from you?



(XII)

The Hirsute Revolution



*...the Nigerian political terrain is a contestation
between the
“thinking thieves” and the “unthinking thieves.”*

NOW I know you're probably thinking of reaching for one form of dictionary or the other, allow me to save you the trouble. The word about to send you on the fool's errand is no other than “hirsute”. That's what happens when you have persuaded yourself to read the writings of a man that enjoys playing with words. It's just another word for hairy.

I grew up conscious of some demand that my head could not be touched with a razor, and I was not to be shaved with any such object. The legend has something about my having been a *Rasta*, either at birth, or because my paternal grandmother owned a Cherubim church, and I was born into the *Aladura* denomination. What happened before I became conscious, I cannot tell, but the barber, “Ijebu” at Omitowoju never dared to repeat the error, after *Maami* had made sure to let him know how his age, obviously, hadn't conferred much by way of wisdom on him.

I believe that the restrictions on razor usage was relaxed or lifted when I turned 10 years old, but with a mother such as the one who fathered me, there was only one hairstyle: Marine cut. Yep! You read that right. The barber's job is simple and easy to execute. Run the clippers through the head, take off all  the hair on the

head, save for a fuzzy down that usually remain on the head, except it be shaved clean with the aid of razors.

I speak of a time when all the barbers needed were manual clippers, scissors, and blades. Our parents were pretty much telepathic in communicating the requirement of baldness for all youngsters of my youth in attendance at the barbershop.

It was in late 1984 or early in 1985. I know this because I was enrolled at OSCAS in Ile-Ife at the time. I had asked Gboyega for a haircut, and perhaps foretelling the tragedy he would bring, he somehow contrived to pretty much give me what we used to call the “*Akobeje*” haircut. This is the case when the scalp ends up with an uneven, and unfinished look, and the sole remedy available was to leave the pate, completely bald. And that was what I did, save for the cross!

I was all of 16 years old, or thereabout. I was rebellious, deeply conscious, and happy to be seen as the rebel that I was by all, except by “*Iya Wale*”.

Iya Wale, the mother of *Wale*, was my father.

Don't worry I have not taken leave of my senses. She birthed me, and, then, she fathered me. My mother it was, who taught me to be a man. I learnt to fear her, and grew to respect her. She is a father unlike any, and I thank God for the man that she is.

We were going back to Ife that day. It was a Sunday; of that I am certain. Gboyega and I were returning to OSCAS, and the haircut was the last act before our departure from Ibadan, where we were neighbours, when he made the skin cut inevitable with  his incompetent

attempt at barbering. I had asked him to etch a cross across the back of my head, then I went back home to pick my luggage to head back to Ife. What I did not count on was the unscheduled and early return of Iya Wale from her outing. I was meant to be gone before her return.

Now she hated the skin cuts I had defiantly begun to sport in that season and had moaned a few times about how much I resembled a street urchin with my head shorn of hair. But she couldn't do anything about it; after all, I hadn't done anything other than to cut my hair, and Maami was always on hand to defend my demand to be allowed some say in how I elected to wear my hair. I am certain that the first thing that she saw was the clean-shaven head, and tried as I did, the cross was soon revealed. I shall spare you the story of the haircut she gave. *Ig` bat` í*, *Ig` bamí` ú*, and the *Koboko* were in attendance, and the need for a blade, almost negligible.

“You will not become a *Hare Krishna*, under my roof”!

That was the day that the hair on my head became more than an adornment but an assertion of my independence, and the foundation for my latter-day employment of the Afro as an article of protest. Liberated from my mother's strict regime by my entry into LASU in 1985; a stricture further loosened by the economic exile to which my mother was compelled by the pauperising policies of the Buhari/Idiagbon and Babangida regimes of the day, I began to shave my head clean whenever I could be bothered to visit the barbers.

After a period of indifference, and perhaps as a concession to the opinion of whatever girl I was besotted with, I began to keep my hair closely cropped, but never completely bare.



With time, electric clippers became increasingly popular, cheaper, and more readily available, and as barber's shops began to proliferate in the 1990s -- a time that coincided with my return to Nigeria and to LASU. I began to have my hair cut much closer to the scalp. But I rarely shaved my head. I never could forget the old injunction not to shave.

By the time I acquired my own clippers, shaving my head as clean as can be with those clippers, became a routine. This was the case through my days in the Law School, and through my early days of marriage. My wife met me bald and married me bald. My children grew up without seeing any hair on my head.

You can thank Obasanjo for my Afro.

At the dawn of this Republic, I was just exiting the Nigerian Law School, Bwari. I am not from moneyed stock, and already having spent 12 years in the university system and being under pressure to begin to earn a living, I along with several of my generation abandoned the political space. I faced the practice of law to the total exclusion of any interest in the political process.

It took the murder of Chief Bola Ige, and the Obasanjo *tsunami* of 2003 to reawaken my consciousness, and to begin the journey to where I am today.

With the AD and *Afenifere* in power in the South West, and with Bola Tinubu making the right noises in Lagos, my state of residence, and economic prospects, I had very simple views of right and wrong. The good guys were in the AD, and the PDP lot were the crooks. We knew the crooks, and yes, *Afenifere* and its  members were the

saints. Life was that simple at a point in time. But then, Ige was killed by the Nigeria State, and as the shepherd was stricken, the sheep were scattered. For all his flaws, Chief Ige was a man with a moral anchor; he was not blind to the truth of Nigeria. A man unfettered by a poverty-driven quest for riches.

“Òjò tó rọ̀, ò hun ló kó ẹ̀ yẹ̀ lé pọ̀ má’dìyẹ̀”.

Ige's death has had the effect of leaving the Yoruba without a conscious rallying point, and the correctness of the political calculus that must have fed the decision to kill Ige has been validated several times by the events that began to unfold after his death. Obasanjo's engineered moon-slide victory at the 2003 polls with the accompanying capture of the southwest states, except Lagos, set the stage for today's shenanigans. But I digress.

By the time Obasanjo's second term began, I had been shaken out of my stupor by the brutality of Ige's murder, and the brazen nature of the PDP takeover of gubernatorial powers in the southwest. I became more interested in the political machinations, but I contented myself with the illusion of a democracy that would eventually correct its own imperfections. Other than to se le for the lesser evil, I was not given to any participation beyond the ritual of private and impotent wailings at the tragedy that was clearly unfolding before my eyes.

Obasanjo's 3rd term agenda changed all that.

It began with whispers. Then the whispers were picked up by that peculiarly Nigerian political invention: the ventriloquist dolls. The ventriloquists are the men in the corridors of power. But as with the ventriloquist, they speak without opening  their mouths. They

fly kites. Or they speak with the aid of dummies. The dummies are sometimes “elder statesmen”, and it is not unknown that the dolls are pastors, traditional rulers, or any of the lot devoid of conscience, who are dependent upon government patronage for sustenance.

A million impoverished youth once earnestly yearned for Abacha.

Obasanjo wanted a 3rd term.

The wanton nature of Obasanjo's power grab, the brazen subjugation of institutions and systems in pursuit of the 3rd term agenda awakened me to the reality of the Nigerian conundrum. We are not a nation of laws; we are not designed to be ruled by laws. The Nigeria State, as it stands, is manifestly unsustainable. The man in me was reawakened at this point, and the urge to rebel was strong, and almost unbearable.

In silent protest, I left the hair on my head to grow, and I declared that I shall not be having my hair cut, until Obasanjo vacated the office.

As I watched Obasanjo diminished himself with his Sisyphean quest for a 3rd term in office, I chafed at the impotence of my anger, and contented myself by telling all enquirers that the strange mop on my head was my silent protest against the 'hypocrite of Owu'. None that knew me was unaware of my angst at the shenanigans playing out in the corridors of power. Obasanjo and Atiku lifted the veil that once covered the impunity, and cancerous corruption that permeates the corridors of Nigerian power.



Obasanjo wobbled and fumbled his way to the 27th of May 2007, and the day arrived, when I might again shave my head. As I watched Yar'Adua being sworn in, I bid my wife goodbye, drove to Thistle Bar in Victoria Island to get myself a haircut.

This was before the only road, in and out of my neighbourhood, was stolen by Tinubu and his gang, and Lekki was a sleepy suburb of VI with her denizens driving into VI for every of their daily needs. VI to Chevron was a 15-20-minute drive.

The toll gates have today enforced the rapid expansion of commercial activities within Lekki itself, a human response to the inhumanity of the rulers.

But I digress.

With the Yar'Adua swearing-in ceremony showing on the TV, the barber asked how I'd like my haircut. A low cut I decreed, and that was what I got. Low, but with enough hair left to require a small comb. I guess I wasn't ready for the extreme of the old pate, shorn of hair. My kids were 4, 2, and a few months old, and I didn't want to be shocking them too much. I looked up to behold a stranger; I looked too much like an uncle I didn't particularly care for.

"Daddy, is that you?" quipped my eldest. She couldn't remember me without my Afro! I'd worn my hair full since she was just a couple of years old. The younger brother didn't have much to say; he just looked at me in a way that mirrors the look I'd give when I believe that someone had just been silly. He had never seen me without the Afro! I must have appeared quite a sight to his curious young eyes.

I went into the bathroom to use the mirror, and I decided I didn't much  fancy the image I

saw. I looked too much like that uncle of mine, a similarity sealed by the hairstyle on my head. I whipped out the clippers; and returned to my roots. I shaved the head clean, as I would have done before. Job done, I looked again, and I beheld “Black Moses”. Good enough, I crowed to the mirror. I knew the man reflected back at me. Samson died, and Moses was born. Again.

With Obasanjo gone, and Fashola in Lagos, I returned again to my private life. I shunned all things political; and focused on the business of Law. What was my business with politics, I thought? I failed to heed the advice of the wise: when the wise abandon politics to the foolish, they must of necessity suffer the reign of fools. I had known Fashola before his corruption by the master he served. The man I knew and worked for was a scrupulously honest man; not the avaricious man he has today become. I trusted that Lagos was in good hands. I was dead wrong.

The first action of the *Jagaban* crew that announced their rapacity to me was the brazen theft of the Lekki-Epe expressway. I watched as my former *oga*, a man that I not only voted for but campaigned for, and for whose personal integrity I had vouched, laboured to explain and justify the theft. I watched as Fashola spent an outrageous amount of public funds to build the Lekki-Ikoyi Bridge, and then proceeded to toll the bridge as well. The personal nature of these pains opened my eyes to the emergence of a most wicked, rapacious, and dangerous hegemony that was growing out of

Lagos,

superintended by Bola Tinubu, whose influence I began to fear more than the bumbling idiots at the federal level.

I was going to tell you about the hirsute revolution, but as it is with the old, I have again digressed.

Fast forward to the formation of the APC, and the emergence of Buhari as its presidential flagbearer, my worst fears about Bola Tinubu came to pass. I had voted for Buhari in his previous attempts at the presidency. He was the 'Saint' amongst the crooks. I had concluded since immediately after the end of the Obasanjo tenure, and the beginning of Fashola's reign in Lagos that the Nigerian political terrain is a contestation between the "thinking thieves" of *Jagaban* plc, at the time known as the AC, and the PDP at the federal level, which I labelled the "unthinking thieves".

Now, I saw a conglomeration of the 'thinking thieves' of the AC joining ranks with the ousted rump of the 'unthinking thieves' and joined by the presumed 'Saint' of the CPC. I smelled the fraud, and I decided not to vote in the election. I captured the decision in the chapter known as "*Do not Die in their Wars*". The pains I endured with my burden and the resultant passion for Nigeria awakened a dormant gift, and I started writing as a way to be relieved of my pains.

Writing is what has given birth to my overgrown facial hair.

As the Yar'Adua days melded into Jonathan's, and the pains of Tinubu's Lagos bit deeper, I began to find relief from the pains in writing down my thoughts. I did not set out to write a book. I began by  typing out my

opinions and broadcasting them on my blackberry phone. This reached its apogee in the days before and after the January 2012 fuel subsidy rallies. As the different events unfolded on the national scene, and in my state of residence, I began to write more and more.

My thoughts became more refined as I wrote.

By the end of 2014, my editor believed he had enough of my works for the publication of a book. But I insisted that I had much more that remained unwritten, and without which the book remained unfinished. That was where I was at the beginning of 2015. As a peace offering, I allowed the publication of the chapter I entitled "*Do not Die In their Wars*" and assured everyone that I would be done with the book before Buhari's inauguration a few months from thence.

Fast forward to December 2015. I had not done any appreciable work on the book; I was no closer to finishing it. This was six months after I had set Buhari's inauguration as a deadline for the completion of the task. I told my editor, wife, partners and friends that I would be staying at home during my usual Christmas break, and would be certain to finish the book before resuming at work in January 2016. I also added a rider that I would not be shaving until the book is done.

Hard as I tried, I failed to keep my word, and wasn't any closer to finishing the book before resuming at work in January of 2016. Problem is, I have never been blessed with either facial, or body hairs. I have enjoyed teasing my brother and friends who have been blessed with the gift of permanent skinheads, but the hair on my chin did not receive the same anointing as the one on my head, and the uncooperative and scattered tuft on my chin drew queries. I was forced to tell my



questioners of how I'd failed to keep my word.

Three years after I made my vow, and kept the beard as a reminder of my failure to do what I believe urgent and purposed, I finally earned the right to have my shave, but as with the Afro, I have come to love the beard on my face. They both remind me of who I am, and who I can be, and that the greatest challenge is to rule the self.

I have a sneaky suspicion it would soon be either the dreadlocks, or the skinhead and a clean shave, perhaps. Time and the struggles ahead shall reveal the course of the *hirsute* revolution.



PART 11

SECTION 2

SUNDRY OTHER ITEMS



CHARACTERS

&

METAPHORS



(I)

Principalities and Powers

6

*... over-spiritualisation of our sad realities
is the reason churches are always busy
praying and fasting and binding...*

WHEN the Bible talks about principalities and powers, we are generally inclined to look for winged creatures with cloven hoofs and forked tails, but nothing can be farther from the truth. Reality is the principalities and powers are actually, completely human, they live, dine and abide with us here on earth. Mostly, they are to be found in our government lodges, GRAs and presidential villa...

What makes them principalities and powers, however, are the existential facts of their being alive, and the net effects that they exert on the citizens. Notwithstanding, when this definition is intended, you should agree and without protestation, that the like of Bola Tinubu, Obasanjo, Saraki, Ganduje, and anyone of our political actors that you may care to reference, are in real sense, principalities and powers.

The very power of their action leads to loss of human lives; brings about pauperisation of the people, and these are all the things you would expect from their spiritual counterparts, whose perplexing duties they execute with swagger, as worthy ambassadors. As a matter of fact, we must learn to take our eyes away from the sky in looking for the fabled



winged creatures and witches flying all over the place; the civil servants sit pretty amongst these peers, and some employees could as well assume this position under your nose doing everything indescribable to ruin businesses.

Whenever you pray against some principalities and powers, remove your eyes from the sky and don't think you are praying against some spiritual entities. You are, in fact, squaring up against physical beings that you can see, yes they are in flesh and blood.

Therefore, when I speak of principalities and powers I am only trying to draw a clear nexus between our physical realities and the bodily manifestation of spiritual cognomens.

There is this over spiritualisation of our sad realities in Nigeria; the reason the churches and mosques are always filled to capacity -- always busy praying and fasting and binding when the real principalities against which they pray are actually human beings like them, who presume to be god and speak and decree things as God.

Satan has gone on a long holiday in Nigeria, apparently busy elsewhere. He has, probably, outsourced his responsibilities, not just to the politicians because, practically, nearly, every Nigerian works for Satan:

- > the *Danfo* driver who would not wait for the traffic light before he zooms off;

- > the Councillor who will not spend the council's money to do what it is appropriated for;

- > the legislator who collects money to rubberstamp every piece of legislation that



- is brought before the House;
- > the judge who would take money to pervert justice;
 - > the police officer who will persecute an innocent person;
 - > the EFCC man who will work as a debt recovery agent;
 - > the medical doctor who will prescribe a surgery that is unrequired by the patient;
 - > the mechanic who will collect money for what is not wrong with your car....

These are principalities and powers. And they are all functioning at different levels to serve their master, Satan, who is on holidays elsewhere. He is no longer around here but gone away to other climes where tasks are much harder to accomplish. Nonetheless, his employees and cohorts are doing fantastic jobs.

Satan's job is more difficult in a place like America where he has to constantly reassure them that it is okay for a man to date a fellow man; some of them, he even convinces to go after cows. He would say: *"look at that cow, buddy; you don't even need to woo her; that is the one you should be procreating with."* In Nigeria, Satan is securely satisfied to subcontract his works, and is permanently holidaying.

Wherever you look, the reality is, you can change Nigerian rulers for all you care, but until you change the mindset of the



people themselves, you will find no difference in the outcome. As a result, it is a waste of time to expect any change in the outcome given that the people themselves have been compromised beyond belief.

Is it government that is responsible for the actions of the mechanics? What does Buhari have to do with the doctor who is prescribing an unneeded surgery? Was it Buhari that asked the doctor to inject patients with ordinary saline water and claim he just treated him for typhoid?

We are a lost people who have got to that point where there is need for a moral revolution; when people get to sit down and look themselves in the mirror, and, then, agree that where we are going is a journey to nowhere. We need to find a different route to travel.

In the main, when you are talking about principalities and powers, it is not just the ones in government houses alone; they are but just the microcosm of what has become a generalised problem.

In this country today, you will be hard-pressed to find one honest man out of a thousand, who is not in one way or the other cheating another man to survive. It is worse when honesty has become a liability in a society that is predicated on rogues. And if you don't find someone to cheat, to defraud, you will be punished for that.

Sanity is an impediment in Nigeria; a handicap.



(II)

A Lost People...



*Nigeria must be fundamentally restructured,
if we are not to continue travelling around
the same mountain*

THERE'S a story I've heard told, dramatised, and read in different variants, with different characters and media employed to drive home the message. I am sure we have all come across it at some point in our lives.

A man and his wife and children often feature in this tale. They would appear to be on a journey to some destination. The husband is almost always the driver, the wife would sit beside him in front -- in most variants of the tale. The children would be in the rear seats, quarrelling as juveniles are wont to. In some, the kids do not feature.

The husband would be driving around lost, his wife, and sometimes, the man himself would be consulting a map. For some reason, Google map never features in this cautionary tale; and for comic relief, husband and wife almost always argue about the direction to take. It usually takes serial identification of an undeniable landmark to convince the driver, he's lost; and that is usually the point, where sanity is restored; and a path charted out of the quagmire.

Nigerians; the driver represents our political leadership. We have been here before.



In the events leading up to the 2015 elections, and beginning in the year before; an amalgam of strange bedfellows came together and formed the APC; it was the vehicle to save Nigeria from the “16 years of PDP misrule”. Problem is, all that happened, was that the “Thinking Thieves” of ACN, the “*Ali Baba*” of CPC, and the “Smart Thieves” of PDP came together to wrestle power from the clueless thieves led by Jonathan.

Aremu of Ota, the *Ebora of Owu*, is on yet another rescue mission leading another coalition. Our cyclical and farcical gyrations have again commenced. The true victims are the peoples trapped in the ‘*shithole*’ called Nigeria.

Those who should know have become, stupefied either into complicit silence, or active complicity. But as with the passenger in the front seat, some of us must again refuse to be silent. We have been here before. We have seen this before. Nothing has changed. Until, and unless we change our system, throw away the map, and rig up a GPS, we will continue to go round and round in circles.

Nigeria must be fundamentally restructured if we are not to continue travelling around the same mountain. Names may change, the *dramatis personae* might revolve, but it is all motion without movement.

We are on a journey to nowhere.



(III)

The Righteous Few

‘

*...when the State becomes as criminal,
it is the constructive engagement of the
moral
majority that has the capacity to change it*

AS I have grown more comfortable writing, I have noticed the preponderance of what may be referred to as the Righteous Few. These are the men and women who have become convinced that Nigeria can be much better than it is; and is beyond redemption. Such is the depth of their disillusionment with the system that they have mostly separated themselves from society, even while seeking survival within the society thus condemned. I used to be a card-carrying member of this cadre, and my track record speaks for me.

But I have found that this thinking is fundamentally flawed, and self-defeatist in the extreme. Those of us who desire change, redefinition, and national rebirth are actually the moral majority, and we defeat ourselves and what should be our purpose when we myopically separate ourselves as we have. There wouldn't be a better time to change Nigeria, and we are not as isolated as we might imagine ourselves to be.

But we have a duty to talk.



The emergence of Muhammadu Buhari is the best thing that has happened to the moral majority. They were the ones mobilised to propel him into office, and while some of them might continue to hope against hope, and cling to the illusion of change, the reality is that, that illusion has been mostly dispelled, and have largely evaporated. We have all been short-changed. But it was a tragedy foretold, and a self-fulfilling prophecy.

What kind of change did we expect from a government that emerged with the support of the traditional levers of powers, ably represented by its pope, '*Saint Matthew*' of Owu, and its enforcer, the 'sage' of Bourdillon?

Talking on social media is not an invitation to beer parlour banter, and yes, it's fine to talk in beer parlours; it's an invitation to move beyond elitist bellyaching on social media to engaging those with whom you will come into contact in your daily lives. The economic and political ills and injustices that you suffer, and, or, see on a daily basis, affect almost everyone you interact with, in your daily life.

But talking must only be a prelude to action.

The purpose of talking must be to inform; to challenge the lies and dogmas that have long imprisoned our people; to educate the uninformed who have been kept ignorant of what may be achieved by thinking men and women, and, ultimately, to mobilise the 99 per cent into a critical mass that is capable of truly changing our society; and propelling it onto the desired path.

Power has never given up anything happily, and when the State becomes as criminal as ours have become, it is the



constructive engagement of the moral majority that has the capacity to change it, not the self-righteous indignation of a few.

The Righteous Few have a duty to engage society, and cannot continue to separate itself, while stupidly hoping that society will somehow reform itself. If you are blessed to see a problem, it is because you either are the solution, or a part of the solution. Let's start talking to ourselves; the very future of our children and our country may depend on it. We are more than they!



(IV)

The Super Eagles and Nigerian Unity



*...for greatness on and off the football pitch,
a true team of our very best must be built*

SINCE the victory of the Eagles I have read posts online, where diverse writers celebrating our somewhat unexpected victory, have wondered why we have been unable to translate the nationalist fervour experienced as a result of our footballing success into the strengthening of our national cohesion and unity.

On the football pitch you win or lose as a team. In real life Nigeria, there are systemic advantages and disadvantages reserved for the individuals based on religious, ethnic, and other affiliations.

When real life Nigeria mimics the principles of football, when citizens are treated equally, and extraneous considerations are not factored into the calculus of citizenship, the commonality will engender the unity we briefly witnessed during football matches.

The true strength of Nigeria, her diversity, is what our unimaginative dealers have turned into her albatross. The typical football team is comprised of several skill sets. The striker's tasks are different from the goalkeeper's; the midfielder's job is different from the defender's... Successful teams are dependent on the capacity to synthesise the



different skill sets; the synergies, thereby created, determine the level of success achievable on the pitch.

Our wicked rulers have never grasped this reality; they have sought to build a nation that excludes the very best of us. Imagine how less successful the Nigerian team would have been had it been comprised only of strikers, and devoid of defenders! A team is the aggregate of the individuals making it up, and a nation will evolve only on the basis of a shared destiny and the commonality of interests.

Nigeria's problems are rooted in her crises of citizenship. This is evidenced by the multiple levels of citizenship available to the peoples trapped within her borders. When we have managed to evolve a composite identikit of the Nigerian; one that is unchanged regardless of ethnicity, and, or, religious considerations, we'll transit from a failed State to the Promised Land.

The Nigeria State is founded on a nepotistic foundation; the result is the multiplicity of citizenship levels. The Nigerian citizen of Imo State origin is treated differently from the one from Bauchi; the man from Lagos is different from the one from Akwa Ibom, and the reservation of privileges for one guarantees disadvantages to the other. In the quests to equalise this anomalous state of affairs, corruption has been normalised.

Congratulations to the Super Eagles, let us enjoy the illusions of nationhood engendered by the interlude of footballing success. Keep in mind that the population of Iceland is less than that of Surulere, yet it has more facilities



for the development of football than the Giant of Africa. Let that knowledge temper your crowds of invincibility. Nigeria is a State, not a Nation, and for greatness on and off the football pitch, a true team of our very best must be built.

The election of June 12, 1993 is the reason I cannot give up on the possibilities of a nation emerging from the ruins of the Nigeria State. Abiola picked a Muslim running mate; he won in his opponent's home state; he won across the length and breadth of Nigeria, and the people for a period, however brief, and before the exertions of Uche Chukwumerije paid off, shared a common destiny and hope.

The election did not cure the afflictions of Nigeria, but it did set us on the path to nationhood. Abacha, Obasanjo, and co., obliterated the bridge built on that day.

What footballing success does for the Nigeria State is to mimic the spirit of national cohesion promised and typified by the events of June 12. But as the drunk must face the sorry reality of his daily existence, Nigerians must wake up from the drunken stupor of our ephemeral football victory over Iceland. But, no, my opinion would remain the same, even if the 'pig' (Mystic Marcus) proves to be truly prophetic, and we somehow defeat the messy Argentines.

Now for some bacons and pork chops....

Up Super Eagles!



(V)

Obasanjo, the Tortoise, and His In-laws...

6

Eebu alo ni ti Ahun, abo ni ti Ana eh

I HEARD my grandparents and several Yoruba elders use this proverbial saying multiple times in my youth. For the benefit of the non-Yoruba speaking readers who aren't able to speak Yoruba, or who speak the language without the benefit of an appreciation of our idioms, I shall offer a transliteration at some point in this narrative.

In my opinion, apart from the racist Lord Frederick Lugard, nobody is more responsible for the failure of the Nigerian State than Obasanjo, the 'hypocrite of Owu', and whilst few are more conscious of the judgment of history, Aremu's presumption that he has the capacity to write his own history borders on self-delusion.

As I have written elsewhere, Obasanjo's chief legacy is the emergence of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as the president of Nigeria. In spite of his many disingenuous and fraudulent attempts at denying his protégé, GEJ remains the apogee of Obasanjo's achievements as the builder of the moribund Nigeria State. It is to the credit of Obasanjo that his decision to abandon his protégé was essentially the beginning of the end of Jonathan's reign.

But I digress.



Obasanjo knows Buhari better than anyone of the many gullible megaphones trumpeting the 'Saint of Daura.' The association goes back over 50 years. Obasanjo knew at the time he found common purpose with Tinubu, the *Alaafin* of Bourdillon, that Buhari might very well come after him, but his ego, the motivation behind his every exertions, blinded him to the truth he knew: Jonathan must be disgraced out of office by fair or foul means.

Buhari can make all the noise in the world about Obasanjo's corruption; his 'Inspector General of *Politics*' can dust up any number of cold case files; the *Bucharest* propaganda machine can abuse and malign Obasanjo all they like, but Buhari will never dare to touch Obasanjo.

All na politics.

Is Obasanjo guilty of the several charges being laid against him? Undoubtedly. He is probably the single most responsible person for the failings of the Nigeria State. But Buhari was not unaware of these crimes, when the man was being feted, courted, wined, and dined. Obasanjo's current travails are merely payback for his refusal to support the Buhari 2nd term agenda.

Now for the transliteration: The tortoise stole from his in-law's farm overnight; and was caught in the act. In anger and retribution, the in-law tied him up, and made a spectacle of him. Those heading to the farm in the morning ridiculed the tortoise and properly labelled him as the thief he was; he was the butt of the jokes but as the people returned from farms by evening time, the tortoise's fate attracted a different view. The



new sentiment was about the harshness of the treatment he was receiving, and the perceived wickedness of his in-law. If he would deal so harshly with his brother-in-law, how then would he deal with a thief unrelated to him?

If Buhari would prosecute Obasanjo for his many crimes, I will be the first to shout *eureka!* But I know that Buhari lacks the moral courage to dare. I am getting increasingly turned off by the impotent lynch mob, baying in self-flagellation at the wily *Ebora* of Owu. I am even more disappointed to see men who should know better, getting caught up in the circus.

Is Obasanjo a thief? Yes, he is perceived so. Is Obasanjo complicit in the murder of Ige et al., I am happy to bet on it? Will the Nigeria State, as currently constituted, ever touch him? Wake me up when they dare. The State is just as criminal as the man, and there's nothing he did that they aren't doing today. What Buhari has done is to privatise corruption, and; only the unaware and the complicit beneficiaries are clapping in applause. He was speaking mostly of the 1970s. We shall be returning from the farm soon.



(VI)

The Genius, the Liar, and the TelePrompTer...



*Àgùtàn tó bá Ajá rìn, yí ò jẹ̀ ìgbé.
– the lamb that fraternises with dogs
shall grow to eat the faeces favoured by dogs*

I HAVE been privileged to learn my trade as a lawyer from diverse sources. My grandmother nurtured and enabled what I love believing is an analytical mind. In fact, as I have written elsewhere; there's something to be said for allowing grandparents, who are healthy, active and willing, play roles in raising children. They are infinitely more patient, better equipped, and retain mental and physical strength for much longer, especially because of the need to keep up with the children in their care.

But as usual, I digress from my purpose.

I want to tell you of the men and women who trained me as a lawyer.

Lagos State University, LASU, has a long and distinguished history of training lawyers. But that faculty was arguably at its very best when I was a student of Law. Having been founded in 1984, the university's law faculty did not stand on its own until perhaps, a couple of years later. It started life as part of the humanities faculty; hence, L&H for those who know.



The story shall yet be told... I refuse to digress.

By the time I was admitted to read law in 1991, the LASU law faculty was an excellent place to study Law. It was blessed with a teaching staff that could rival any to be found anywhere in Nigeria, and beyond.

I was privileged.

My lecturers were mostly youthful and undeniably brilliant. The older heads were also men who thought outside boxes, and encouraged scholarship.

We had Baba Yerokun; Professor Adaramola; Mama Susu - they were the older ones. Steady hands, strict, but parental in their guidance of the students.

There were the Ikhariales, Hogans, Ogboyes, *et al.* And then you had the geniuses... there was, 1.0. Smith... yes, I know I did type 1.0, but if you were in LASULAWS, you will understand. We had Fagbohun, he's today the VC of LASU. We had Emiri, he was everybody's dad or brother. And then there was Osinbajo -- Professor Yemi Osinbajo.

Professor Osinbajo taught the Law of Evidence. I believe I have heard some people mention that he taught them Land and Property Law. That might have been during his time at UNILAG, or after my time in LASU.

I shall be eternally grateful to God for the great privilege it was to have learnt one of the most difficult and important areas of the profession from a true professor, who was not only a gentleman, but a genius; if I have ever seen one.

Yemi Osinbajo's class was one that you started looking forward to from your first year, even though you would not



enjoy the privilege until your fourth level of a five-tiered system. The seniors whispered his name with awe. He was the one that cometh shorn of all, but chalks, a duster, and a bottle of coke. If you were lucky, you saw a dapper man, immaculately clad in striped or dark suit, well-coiffed, with a rakish parting in the middle of his pate. He had a piercing gaze, and he left you in no doubt that he sees; and will remember you.

When Osinbajo taught me, his was the only lecture I attended religiously. Much as the fear of Smith competed with my awe for his mental acuity, I cannot warrant that I was as faithful in attendance at his lectures as I was with Osinbajo's. The genius of the man was a magnet that drew me inexorably to his classes. His genius cured an innate, and perhaps, congenital tendency for academic truancy. From primary through law school, I was legendary for cutting classes. But I cannot now remember ever missing Osinbajo's class.

The faculty timetable for the Law of Evidence classes were basically provisional in my time. Professor Osinbajo was an incredibly busy man. In a land long enveloped in darkness, his incredible genius must have brought him to the attention of a lot of important people, and the faculty in recognition of his, perhaps, unpredictable schedule, allowed him to, more or less, set his own lecture schedule as he saw fit. Most of our lectures with him were on Saturdays, and he possessed of unbelievable stamina, would sometimes lecture for as long as 3-4 hours at a time.



Osinbajo taught without the aid of notes, texts, or even scraps of papers. He gave lectures, taught, and would dictate as many as 6-8 pages of lesson notes. He would give cases with their full citations, and pages; quote entire sections of the Evidence Act and would do so with great élan and panache. He was a spellbinder.

Professor Yemi Osinbajo is possibly the most intelligent human being that I have ever met. He demystified the Law of Evidence; his class must have had a pass rate in the higher 90s.

He was an excellent teacher.

I have, however, never fully understood his politics. I had always thought it odd that he had found the grace to serve as the *Jagaban's* consigliore, whilst also serving as an ordained minister in the house of God. The two are seemingly contradictory in my view. But being a recipient of grace myself, and taking seriously the injunction not to judge so that I might not be judged myself, I came to simply view him as wasted in the roles he had accepted in service of his political overlord. And so, it was, until I saw the genius and his *TelePrompTer*, and I was reminded that the truth teller has no need for a good memory.

Professor Osinbajo represented his legal principal (Buhari) at the graduation ceremony of the Nigerian Defence Academy, and as is the usual tradition at such ceremonies, the commander-in-chief gave an address. I watched as my genius teacher stumbled through the address he was reading



off the teleprompter, and I was pained by the spectacle I beheld.

Yemi Osinbajo did not believe what he was reading. The speech was not saying anything of substance, just more of the ruling party's steady drivel, inanities, and mind-numbing lies. I saw my *Oga* reduced by an evil system, and perhaps compromised beyond help. The Yemi Osinbajo that taught me would not have required a teleprompter if he believed in what he was saying.

I have taken the time to write this piece, not in condemnation of the man that I once knew, and admired, but as a warning to all who continue to believe that the Nigerian system is amenable to reasoned reforms and changes. It is not. And what's more; I have seen with Osinbajo the proof of the Yoruba proverb: *Àgùtàn tó bá Ajá rìn, yí ò jẹ̀ ìgbé* -- the lamb that fraternises with dogs shall grow to eat the faeces favoured by dogs.

The Nigeria State is a contagion.



(VII)

IITA...

Reminding of a Lost Paradise



*...Why do the men who have ruled Nigeria
allow the given paradise to become a hell?*

I HAVE been known to say in various ways that knowledge is a burden. That knowing confers a burden on you to act on what you know. If you do not know, you feel no pressure to effect a change. When you do know, the pressure comes on you to do something to bring about the vision of the good that you have been given, save and except when you are quintessentially evil, and you wilfully ignore to do the right thing.

The burden of knowledge is not easily carried in a country like Nigeria, where you know that you don't know much better than those who have ruled, or are ruling the country; but who, in spite of the knowledge of what is right, continue to do the wrong thing, and continually hold the country down, conscious of the evil of their ways.

So, knowledge in Nigeria is indeed a burden. But the burden is particularly heightened, because you know you are not the only one who knows. Every sane person ought to know the exact same thing that you know because these are not facts open to debate. These are truths.



When I was growing up attending Fiditi Grammar School in my mother's hometown, I would invariably pass right in front of the IITA at Idi-Ose in order to go to Fiditi. When I was home on holidays and my mother needed meat, it was mostly my duty to go to the butchers at Moniya to pick up the slab of meat or any choice part my mother would want.

But after I left Ibadan to become a student of Lagos State University, LASU in 1985, my visit towards that axis needing to drive by IITA had become less. Since 1983 when I left Fiditi Grammar School, I couldn't have driven past IITA more than five or six times at the maximum. In fact, I am sure I have not driven past IITA since we buried my maternal grandfather many years ago. So, it's been awhile.

But why do I talk of IITA?

Its green lawns as you drive past, even in my youth, we found particularly striking. We could see the lawns through the wire-merge fence. They were immaculate. Always green. Always well mowed. Always like some land far away from this place. It just didn't fit in. It stood in rebuke of the environment in which it stood.

I didn't know what it was as a kid, but something about it just set it apart.

It wasn't the same as every other thing that I could see in my environment.

But I digress.

So, *yeah*, I remember IITA very well. I remember it only because I drove past it and its lawns were immaculate. Nothing else about it.



As I grew older and agriculture became the propaganda it has been turned into by successive governments, I had heard more and more about IITA. However, I had not had any occasion or reason to familiarise myself with what it was that IITA was doing. But it was in the news and I saw it. White trucks with the dainty orange branding, and it just seemed to me another imperialist outpost in Nigeria where the West doles out its hypocritical charity in the name of aids.

Then recently, I started hearing from friends about how nice it was to stay at the IITA guest house in Ibadan. IITA now runs a guest house in addition to whatever else it does! Aside knowing it as an agricultural research institute, I knew it initially from its lawns, and, then, as a research institute; it became a place I might want to stay if I wanted some seclusion.

At a point, a dear friend posted pictures of herself and her children on holiday in Ibadan, at the IITA. Beautiful pictures! I was intrigued. Seeing as I was already planning a getaway, for a few days, so I do not lose my mind in the midst of the madness of Lagos, I followed my instinct and cancelled my initial plans to go to Le Meridian Ogeyi in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

So, off to IITA I went.

My visit to IITA filled me with wonder. Men have found ways to take what was a forest and built smack-bang within it a replica of the society from whence they came. Once upon a time, there was a jungle here, but by design, men have turned what was a jungle into a beautiful environment. The



houses exist more like intrusions in gardens; every tree is standing in its rightful place; roads are well laid out.

The lawns unbelievably green; the facilities at the guesthouse quite Spartan. The environment is unbelievably beautiful. As much as I loved what I saw, it also filled me with pains.

Knowledge has not been a burden for our leaders and we the followers need to be wondering why: there is nothing we know that they can claim to be unaware of.

Obasanjo was part of the 50th anniversary celebration IITA. He was the president of Nigeria in 1977. He has been a constant in Nigeria since that time. He has held executive office in Nigeria for over 10 years.

Nations are built by men and it takes visionary men to build a nation.

IITA Ibadan is a product of a vision.

The same environment we have failed at taming, turning into the paradise that they have built amidst our mess, we have missed building because of leaders who refuse to see what they see. Or do they? These questions plagued my mind as I laboured to fulfil my purpose in Ibadan. Subsequent events, however, conspired to ensure that I must return to the lessons that the vision of IITA birthed.

The day before I was scheduled to depart from my IITA redoubt, I went on a farm inspection somewhere on the outskirts of Ibadan. I had done trial of an out-grower programme with a farmer friend of my younger brother; and



having been given several reasons to suspect that I was being conned, the visit was imperative.

I was sent forth from the farm with a few bunches of plantain, and some other farm produce; and my car boot was filled to its capacity. I made sure to let the security men at the gate take notice of my packed boot and its contents. After all, I'd seen how punctilious they were upon presenting myself for entry on the first day. I have always abhorred the manner in which Nigerian security personnel, at foreign establishments, tend to treat Nigerians, even worse than their employers. I wanted no grief from anyone when I would be leaving at first light the following day.

Come the following morning, a Sunday I think; *lo* and behold, I was stopped at the gate. The man asked from whence I came by the plantains in the car boot. If you knew anything about me, you would know that the question was going to precipitate an eruption. For me, I didn't hear any question; I heard myself being accused of stealing from the farms that abound within the complex I was seeking to exit. I was cocked and loaded, but "Baba" spoke before I could pull the trigger.

I had met Baba at the point of my arrival at the IITA. He appeared to be the head of the security detail at the main entrance. He looked to be in his mid- to late 60s, but might very well be in his early to mid-70s. He probably was in some military or paramilitary force in his youth; thus, he had what I thought was the usual Uncle Tom airs about him. I did not like him; and I did what I have always done with people I don't particularly like. I was extremely polite, and respectful



in my brief exchanges with him, and I was similarly so treated by him.

Baba asked that I be allowed to leave undisturbed; that he was there when I had returned from the farm inspection the previous day. He vouched he witnessed me drawing attention to the cargo of farm products. I was bowled by his intervention, particularly in the light of my original impressions of the man. But that was when I disrespected myself!

I, Oladele Tomilola, the son of Iya Olu, I disrespected myself.

Moved to gratitude, wanting to encourage, and be appreciative, I fished out all of N2000 and offered the largesse to the old man. He turned it down rather blithely; waved me off, for the cars behind me to come through. A wiser man would have taken the hint and gone his way; not Oladele! If only I knew of the “*àbùkù*” that awaited me!

Àbùkù is not the same thing as disrespect, but it is the closest word in English language. The sole difference being that, for it to be an *Àbùkù*, the person disrespected must have brought the disrespect on himself.

I did.

There are two gates that must be exited before one may be out of the precinct of the IITA. The encounter narrated above took place by the main entrance, which houses the main security post. I surmised as I argued with Bayo (my companion in the car), that the several security cameras at the gate were the real reasons Baba wouldn't take the tip. And having peremptorily concluded as I had, I dropped the



squeezed princely sum of N2000 on the road, in the full expectation of its eventual rescue by Baba.

That was the price I paid for my *Àbùkù*. I am not sure which hurt the most, but in my mirrors, I saw Baba gesticulating angrily; the men at the final gate, which is in clear sight of the first, ordered my return in compliance with Baba's shouted orders. I returned contrite, confused, and thoroughly disgraced to pick up the crumpled notes -- with Baba's stinging and strident rebukes as the backdrop of my humiliation.

I drove away thoroughly chastened, but also intrigued. All I did was give a tip. I was not asked for a bribe; I was just trying to be nice. Bayo and I drove rapidly out of Ibadan, debating what we had just experienced with some consternation and befuddlement. But then, as we drove past the CRIN at Idi Ayunre, I had my equilibrium restored by the truest of

Nigerian institutions:

The Nigerian Police Force. *Anti-terror Police*, their badges and truck said. Red berets on their heads, the officer who approached my well-parked car was courteous than most; perhaps, helped into politeness by my obvious readiness to comply with the order to park. "*Your boys are here sir*" was his beggarly greeting. I exchanged a knowing look with Bayo; straightened the notes that had bought me Baba's rebuke, and handed them to the grinning officer.

My largesse received salutes, but I was left with questions to ponder.



My trip to IITA was intended as a writing retreat, and I was able to do a lot of work while there. But IITA also left me seriously troubled.

Houston Texas is the first place I visited in America, and I was impressed by the warm weather; how unlike depressingly cold Britain it was. I found the weather so welcoming that I was not too surprised by the large numbers of my fellow countrymen, whose presence would be hard to miss. If Houston showed me what we could be with visionary leaders, IITA proved the absence of vision in the foundations, structure, and governance of Nigeria.

Obasanjo's roles at the IITA anniversary celebrations provoked another line of thought which then birthed more thoughts. The central questions these birthed were: do the men who have ruled Nigeria, and undoubtedly failed to govern her with any discernible vision, know better? If they do, why have they then wilfully allowed the paradise given by God to become the hell that it has become?

Assuming that they know, and have merely elected a conscious decision to assail their people and afflict them; what have they done for themselves, even with the insane riches that they have acquired; even as the poverty of the people had multiplied, mutated, and, been weaponised?

I was assailed by these questions, and I resolved to visit Obasanjo Presidential Library to gauge just how well he had done with the crown jewel of his crooked and myopic life. *Aremu the Lion Cub*, is the first instalment of that resolve. Whilst I doubt that Obasanjo has anything of substance to



show me beyond my encounter with *Aremu* the unfortunate cub, I shall ensure that I revisit the library to conclude my research.



(VIII)

'Aremu the Lion Cub'...
Metaphor for a Blighted Land



*Nigeria, the giant of Africa that has
refused to learn to walk.*

A fool at 58 must awaken before it's too late

I HAVE been working on a couple of ideas for books for some time. The one I started with looks at the Nigerian situation; the systemic collapses; the relentless march towards

State failure, and the Nigerian situation in general.

I have looked at the issues through the eyes of my generation; the ones born just before, during, and immediately after the Civil War. The same one that saw the rump of a functional Nigeria, even as we can now recognise the moments in our youth, when the seeds of today were consumed by average men, who bestrode a nation, and consequently enslaved the people.

In my works and research, one name has stood above all as one of the principal architects of the Frankenstein we have been saddled with today. I speak of none other than Olusegun Obasanjo, *Aremu* of Ota, the "*Ebora* of Owu," and one of the major principalities that have held Nigeria down, and assured that paradise should be hell to the people that God has blessed beyond belief.

In my quest to be fair to 'Aremu', and in fulfilment of my promise to visit the monument Obasanjo built -- to greed -- in



the name of a presidential library; seeing as he not only ignored to build a nation, he helped to destroy one; I was curious to see what he (Obasanjo) built; so, I went visiting for a weekend.

Oh, I must tell you of 'Aremu the Lion Cub'. The tragedy of a blighted land; illustrated in the captivity of the king of the jungle in the cage built by avarice.

Obasanjo's presidential library complex is a fitting monument to the unbridled greed, delusions, and intellectual poverty of the builder. It is built in the cacophonous and pretentious image of Obasanjo, perhaps, as a salute to his youth at Ibogun in Ifo part of Ogun State. Perhaps, envious of Soyinka's forest sanctuary some few kilometres away in the same town, Aremu has a "zoo" directly opposite the actual library, on top of which I was told he, the "The Lion Cub" stays, in the penthouse apartment.

Aremu has clear views of his kingdom, and his "zoo" has the pride of place.

My wife, Olufunmilola, insisted that we visited the zoo. She was traumatised by the experience. And I shall never look at a lion the same way again!

Obasanjo's "zoo" comprises a warren of walkways, carved into the rocks that were blasted before his Hilltop GRA was built. As you walk through, you come to a complex of wire mesh cages containing monkeys of all sorts -- in cages that I would never allow for puppies! The monkeys showed clear



signs of extreme stress, and were pacing in place, without the space to roam as intended by their Maker.

A pair of ostriches was kept in a pen that cannot measure more than 150 square meters; they are the most fortunate of creatures trapped in 'Aremu's nightmare. We were shocked to the marrows to behold *Aremu!* If I ever doubted that Obasanjo is wicked, the doubts evaporated at the sight of '*Aremu the Lion Cub.*'

Across the lane from the ostriches were a couple of enclosures. That was where we found '*Aremu*'.

"*Aremu the Lion Cub,*" the sign on the wall declares. Holding our noses, we drew closer to examine what initially appeared to be a pair of seriously malnourished Boer-bulls, but which upon closer inspection, proved to be a pair of young lions. Next to them, an older lion just as begrimed, and clearly malnourished!

No true animal lover would keep any animal in the manner that Obasanjo has caged '*Aremu*'. I have kept Boer-bulls, and they had by far more space to run than '*Aremu*'; another unfortunate victim of the avarice of Olusegun Obasanjo. What's more? Obasanjo's short-sightedness has led to the reality of the cub's growth being ignored, and a maturing male lion remains saddled with the toga of a cub. Not much unlike Nigeria, the giant of Africa, that has refused to learn to walk.

A fool at 58 must awaken before it's too late.

Nigeria may be likened to Obasanjo's zoo. We the encaged citizens are little different from the animals in his cages. But



it is '*Aremu*', the unfortunate cub and his cell mates that best tell the story of the tragedy that have befallen us under the rules of miserably ignorant, avaricious, and poverty-stricken men of limited and pimpish imaginations.

In a state that cares little for human rights, '*Aremu*' will probably die in the filth of his cage, and the starvation in which I found it during my visit.

But who cares about the rights of a lion, given a bad name in order to kill it?



(IX)

The Thieves and the Maddening Broom...

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*As the broom has swept, we have seen
the rotten underbelly of the Nigeria State;
we have seen wilful and treasonous subversion
of the people's will*

I GREW up in Ibadan, and I am not talking of the Ibadan of old Bodija, UI, or any of the GRAs. I speak of, yes, Inalende, Ode-Olo, and the rest. The homes were mostly tenement buildings with rooms arranged opposite each other; opening onto a corridor with one main door at the front, and another to the rear. The toilets, if they had any, were mostly at the rear as would be the bathrooms too. The communal kitchen would also be found to the rear of the building.

But it is on the brooms that I would like for us to focus.

The brooms are almost always smoke-stained, and rarely long. The brooms are usually *Ijabes* in truth; that being the shorter broom that is used in the preparation of *Ewedu*, the accompaniment of *amala*, a staple food of the Yoruba. The broom would hang at the entrance to the home, unless of course, you were like my grandpa, a Christian who shuns the religious syncretism of the Yoruba of the time.

Where the crosses hang today, was once for the brooms.



The broom would have some charm, almost always in red colour adorning its neck; binding together the broom itself. The intricacies of the charm binding the broom differ from one to the other, but the charms are almost always meant to disarm the thieves, I was told. These brooms, I somehow learnt, were meant for the uninvited guests that visited at night.

Stealing did not start today, and the Ibadan of my youth had its fair share of night marauders.

It was Baba Agbede I asked. He was one of my grandfather's cronies, a blacksmith, and one of the geriatric victims of my *Ayo Oloppón* prowess. I must have been sent on an errand to his forge, and as was usual with us kids, I had talked him into allowing me to work the bellows. I was watching the flame dance in the kiln as I listened to him tell the tales of the good old days. At least I did, until I saw the broom.

The broom as with the other ones I'd seen around, was sooty from the open flames of the forge's furnaces. But black as it was, the red rag tying the broom was still a scary looking piece with cowries, a little horn, one that I was to learn, came from the roe deer, believed in Yoruba myths to be the active ingredient in the completion of the "*Ase*"/*Afose*, when rendered in full. *Ase*, or *Afose*, properly described, as it may not be translatable, is a charm that renders the enchanted enthralled, and involves the loss of will, and, or, cognitive abilities.



The “*owo*” -- that's the Yoruba word for broom, the very symbol of our ruling party, was a traditional security insurance, Baba Agbede explained. But as with the aged, I got the explanations with visual aids. The old man told me war stories, tales of the broom, and its proud heritage.

In the days of old, when the Yoruba wars raged, Baba Agbede said, there was a hamlet deep in the forest. An old man lived with his equally aged wife, and for company they had an even older cat. Theirs was a simple, idyllic life; far from the madness of the raging civil wars, when men enslaved their brethren for beads. They lived in peace until trouble invited itself.

The cat heard the racket of their tiptoeing hoofs, but unlike the dog, it lacked a bark; and meowing didn't do; the geriatrics at sleep, practice it seems for the coming sleep. The crash of the door awakened the dead. The old man, unruffled from sleep, only a simple question asked: are you looking for the brooms? A motley crew of eight beheld each other and nodded acquiescence with coordinated alacrity. Mama pointed them to a pile of brooms. You have never found a cleaner hamlet, and to the farm the old man marched them with leisure at dawn. That was the story of the broom, Baba Agbede said.

I behold Nigeria, and the broom is working. I see the APC exposing the lies. As the broom has swept, we have seen the rotten underbelly of the Nigeria State; we have seen “inconclusive election” enter our political lexicon; we have seen wilful and treasonous subversion of the people's will in



Kogi, and, in Osun; and, we have seen that a broom besmirched with faecal waste is incapable of cleaning the house.

The APC broom has become an *Ijabe*, just as useless as the tattered umbrella of the PDP.

But the brooms of my youth would appear to have come to Lagos. Indiscriminate importation of brooms from outside Lagos has brought an enchanted broom to town. The ongoing *kasala* (rumble) in the ruling APC has nothing to do with the welfare of the people of Lagos; it is an internal power struggle between the godfather, and his boy. *Na overskill wan kill the Jagaban.*

Bi í lé bá sị ní' tòrò, ọmọ àlè ibẹ̀ni kò tìi dà' gbà.

The bastard in his house has fully matured, and for now, at least, I counsel that we all grab our popcorn, recline our seats, and watch the quarrel of bandits for the lessons it teaches.

Àjà túkà ni ti Agbarin lágbára ẹ̀jẹ̀ Jesu o! Ase!



(X)

The Rape of Lekki...
A personal testimony

6

*The State and the underworld have meshed,
and now the State has become the criminal
entity*

PROVIDENCE has ordered my steps; I had the privilege of having been in Lagos State University (LASU) and been friends with a couple of princes from the Ojomu Chieftaincy Family. One was Ibrahim Oluyemi Bakare, first son of the *Balogun* of Ojomuland, Chief Y.O.B Bakare, who was later assassinated in December 2005 by yet unknown gunmen in full glare of the police checkpoint that used to exist on Falomo bridge; another victim of a murderous system or State.

Ibrahim's older cousin, Azeez Babajide Akinloye, currently at the House of Representatives, was another Prince I made friends with. These two men were instrumental in leading me to Ajiran Lekki as far back as when Jide's father, the Ojomu, got his coronation. My father might have lived and died an Ijesha man, I might have grown up in Ibadan, but I consider Lagos my state, and Ajiran and the greater Lekki, my hometown. Bola Ahmed Tinubu oversaw a most brutal rape of the Lekki Peninsula. I am talking about land grabs. Though, he is not alone in such things -- practically all who



occupied that office had done the same; Tinubu turned it into a science. What he did, which no one had ever done before, was the theft of a commonwealth. He superintended the theft of the only road in and out of the Lekki metropolis. He did so in full glare of the cameras, in broad daylight, with aplomb, and he was applauded for his 'foresight' and 'vision'.

A company owned by Tinubu vide his cronies was granted a 30-year concession and lease over the 47 kilometres road to Epe. They were to rebuild the existing road.

The Lekki Expressway scam supported a new era in the annals of the political brigandage in Nigeria; it was brazen, frontal. It vaporised whatever illusions I might have had about any hope for Nigeria. I was not quite surprised by the theft, but I was stunned by the acquiescence of the citizens in their own rape, and the hand wringing acceptance of its inevitability. The People's Democratic Party's federal government was just as complicit in this most violent rape of a people. The Federal Government facilitated that transaction by offering a requisite sovereign guarantee; and unlike during the Obasanjo's years, Tinubu merely cut whatever deals are required, while the Federal Government under Yar'Adua, gave the devil his due, and fully participated in the rape.

Obviously, with foreknowledge that the fuel subsidies were going to be removed on January 1, 2010, the Lekki Concession Company (LCC) commenced its tolling operations a week before! When it is necessary for their



interest, seeming extremes of Nigeria politics always find the grace to work or wreck together.

I watched the Ojota rallies in bemusement. Paid agent of the system and State, presumed to shape the discourse, and channel the anger of the people! Leaders of Organised Labour misinterpreted the mood of the people; they staged the usual rounds of strikes before the eventual sale of their integrity and conscience. But the people would not be pacified and the State, be that the Action Congress of Nigeria or the People's Democratic Party part of it, worked together to brutally put down the putative spring.

In the Lekki axis, the government was concerned about its toll gates, and it mobilised the state within the State, to do its dirty work.

...A history of brigandage

Ajah had for long been a hotbed of violent gang activities, and opportunistic robberies. Most of these crimes are the direct result of the land grab battles by the different families with traditional ownership rights to land. The conflicting claims have always been there, but with the emergence of the Olumegbon (deceased), and his decision to resign from Ajah, a particularly brutal war of attrition was waged for the ownership of Ajah. The first victim was the safety of the ordinary citizens seeking their livelihood in that part of Lagos. Local and imported thugs, and cut throats found new



patrons whilst the Labour strikes endured, and Ojota, and Falomo were raging.

Ebunolu Adegboruwa, I believe it was, who attempted to organise something in Lekki.

The thugs were deployed to prevent citizens from venturing out of the Ajah axis. I say on my honour that citizens were robbed at Ajah bus Stop and its environs, in plain sight of policemen who turned blind eyes. For as long as the strike lasted, Ajah residents lived in terror of the thugs, stationed at the bus Stop, and who patrolled the road on dozens of *okada*. I personally observed those young men at Chevron Roundabout, which appeared to be the extent to which they were allowed to range. I saw them exchange greetings familiarly with the mobile police unit that was stationed there! If you still doubt that the State and the underworld have fused in our dear city and nation, please take time to observe what transpires at every major bus Stop in our beloved Centre of Excellence. You will see the *Agbero* with his tab; he checks off who has paid. The policeman keeping the tab is also there for the wary to sight, even though they sometimes have civilian employees acting for them. Every driver pays, and upon that payment, he practically acquires immunity; he drives confident in the knowledge that he is covered. The State and the underworld have meshed, and now the State has become the criminal entity.

I saw all of these ills, and the capacity to remain silent, and apolitical was lost.

I became involved with efforts to sensitise the people. I wrote countless Blackberry messages that were broadcast; I



did bulk short message service (SMS) pieces; we formed a group, Lambs Can Cry, and railed impatiently against what we rightly identified as a colossal rape of our commonwealth. I refused to pick up the Electronic pass -- the payment system that allows one to use the less congested gates at the toll plaza. I wanted to feel the pain of my rape each time I drove through the gates.

By the time the 2015 election cycle came around, the full effect of the Lekki toll gates and the unending road construction works had become evident. Travel time on the road, at practically all the times of the day, had increased because of the numerous roundabouts. The comically slow pace of the downgraded works being done, and the almost total abandonment of previous attempts were all so clear, just as the fact that an obviously incompetent firm had been engaged to build such an important road. We saw tailors masquerading as engineers on the project! The numerous potholes already evident on the road stand as testimony to this claim.

...Lekki, a brief profile

Lekki was home to a transit-based economy. Its residents, prior to its redistricting within the tollgates, travelled to Victoria Island and Ikoyi for practically everything. Their work places were located outside of Lekki. Markets, schools, hospitals, name it, we had none before our roads were stolen.



Lagosians outside the Lekki corridor have a mistaken impression of Lekki. They have been led to believe that Lekki is a rich man's neighbourhood, and its inhabitants are wealthy people. Nothing can be further from the truth. Sincerely, you will find a lot of very wealthy Nigerians living inside Lekki Phase 1, parts of Oniru Estate, and some highbrow neighbourhood like Nigeria Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (NICON) Town. Because of the ready availability of mortgages to the middle class that recovered and emerged during the Obasanjo years, the professional middle class also fuelled a sustained development of gated estates in which a lot of the aspirational class lives. But the vast majority of its residents live in *paro-paro*, face-me-I-slap-you tenements in Idado, Igbo-Efon, Gbara, Badore, Oke-Ira, Olugborogan, Awoyaya, Bogije, Okun-Ajah etc.

...The neglected

In the eight years Bola Ahmed Tinubu spent in office, he did not build a single school in the Lekki axis; he did not build hospitals or health centres; he built less than 10 kilometres of roads in the entire axis.

In twenty years of its largely unchallenged hegemony, the Lagos State Government (LASG) has not been able to provide additional schools for the teeming population. The only secondary school is the one by the Mobil headquarters in Maroko. The State has practically abandoned the provision of basic infrastructure to the private sector. Lekki is dotted with all manner of schools -- from the badly provisioned, but ridiculously expensive to the shack straddling the canals.



Lekki's schools are many, but the state remembers them only when it is time to get some money out of them.

Basic amenities like public waterworks are non-existent in over 98 per cent of the entire Lekki Peninsula. In fact, the only place where the next bane of attempt has ever been made is inside Lekki Phase 1, and I believe that one has stopped pretending to work. The rest of the neighbourhoods are dependent on buying trucked water or using ever more unsafe boreholes. Lekki's been forgotten and is only remembered when the State seeks to milk its citizens.

The depth of Lekki's abandonment is easy to see once you get off the main road and attempt to use the side roads. During the rains, the roads are streams in parts, rivers in some areas, and obstacle courses for the most parts. Lekki developed without a drainage plan. When in the dying days of his regime, Fashola launched the Lekki Master Plan and awarded various contracts, the people cheered and waited expectantly. As with every one of their corrupt gyrations, the canals have caused more problems than they have solved. Badly constructed and mostly higher in gradient than the water they were meant to channel into the lagoon, most of the canals are today water collection points, and homes to mosquitoes and all manner of reptilian life. It was against this backdrop that the Action People's Congress campaigned and still won the last elections in Lekki and Lagos.

Why?



(XI)

**2003 Elections:
...Between the Lion and the Fox**



*The State and the underworld have meshed, and now the
State has become the criminal entity*

THE 2003 elections during which Obasanjo captured the Southwest and from which Bola Ahmed Tinubu emerged as the only Alliance for Democracy governor, after a spirited rearguard battle, was also the beginning of the Tinubu mystique; the capitulation of the Professional Civil Rights group, and the end of critical opposition to Tinubu's hegemony. He was emboldened to throw off whatever remained of Afenifere's influence over his government and person, and he became the rallying point for many who were opposed to the person of Obasanjo.

The Yoruba have always been reflexively tribal in their outlook on life without being hostile to any others; we have always engaged the Nigerian project from a defensive position. We hold our homeland and vote as a block for the party with progressive leanings, which at independence was the Action Group. Other parties had their space under the sun, but the Yoruba have always tended to vote en masse for the party they identified as their own. With the death of the Action Alliance, and Tinubu's survival, something different emerged from the ruins.



Lagos State is a home for all, a microcosm of the Nigeria State itself. Some have argued that every Nigerian family has a representative in the city state. I will not argue with that. Lagos is also the centre of journalism in Nigeria; the critical press -- print and electronic -- are mostly Lagos based; and the owners of the various organs reside in the state. It is not called the 'Lagos Press' for nothing. Lagos, as a state, defines the Nigeria State, and it became the sole inheritance of the Action Group/Unity Party of Nigeria /Alliance for Democracy

Afenifere political family. Or so they thought.

Obasanjo is not a man to take anything less than total and complete annihilation of his enemies. Being forced to hand off Lagos in order to lessen the public outcry did not go down well with him; he launched sustained and very ferocious attacks against Tinubu. He undermined him at every opportunity, and raised Ogunlewe and his Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FERMA) corps to attack Tinubu's initiatives and make the state ungovernable for him. Funsho Williams remained in the political space, preparing for the 2007 elections and offering temperate critiques of Tinubu and his policies. Tinubu fought valiantly against the vast array of Federal thugs. Obasanjo made Tinubu the hero that he became. If Obasanjo was properly defined as an uncouth bully, Bola Ahmed Tinubu carefully branded himself the only credible opposition leader in the country.

The undisputed leaders of Afenifere, both Chief Abraham Adesanya and his deputy, Uncle Bola Ige, had died in



different circumstances. Chief Adesanya died of old age, but Chief Ige was murdered by what Professor Wole Soyinka diplomatically labelled “a nest of killers in the People's Democratic Party (PDP)”, and which I believe acted with the knowledge and acquiescence, if not direction, of Obasanjo himself. People better informed than I have addressed this issue already, but how a serving Attorney General was brutally murdered in his home, and his killers have not been found till date remains just another stain on Obasanjo's soiled garment.

With the passage of Adesanya and Ige, and his prime position as the lone survivor of the People's Democratic Party onslaught, Tinubu inherited the mantle of leading the opposition, which has historically always been headed by the Yoruba, but now fell on the governor of the richest and most viable state in Nigeria.

Obasanjo is an insufferable hypocrite, a well-practised liar unbound by any respect for his own words; ruthless to the point of being relieved of a conscience, and totally consumed by his inability to brook views and opinions different from his own conceited ones. He went after Tinubu with all the tact of a bull in a China shop; he fought unfairly, he fought with regard to Law, and he fought without either the moral authority, or any altruistic pretensions. Obasanjo is defined by his pettiness, and in his wars with Tinubu, he sank to new lows to prove his point.

I respect Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his unparalleled political instincts... his depth of understanding and street smarts were



deployed in the battles ranging from the withheld local government funds, to the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency's (FERMA) rampages. Obasanjo was properly defined as the rampaging bully that he is, hypocritical bats were carefully exposed, and the David and Goliath narrative was sold to the Nigerian people by Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his media savvy team. Tinubu was also rebranded and he emerged as the sole hope of the Nigerian progressives in their quest to slow down the Obasanjo train.

My enemy's enemy is my friend, or so the popular cliché says. Bola Ahmed Tinubu acquired many new friends. Some consciously flocked to his banner whilst yet more were contended to simply cheer him on as he fought gamely against the hypocrite of Ota. I was one of his quiet supporters. I could already see disheartening signs of what has become evident today. Much as I disliked the Obasanjo hegemony, I was also worried about the increasing descent into the cult of personality being built around the person of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and the lack of moral, financial and or political accountability that were evident even at the beginning of this period.

The Lagos press, the professional Human Rights crusaders, purchased academics, the uninformed mass, anyone who could not abide by the suffocating hypocrisy of Obasanjo, began to clothe Tinubu in Obafemi Awolowo's gown. He became the undisputed champion of the common man. Tinubu was born to play the role, he has street smarts unrivalled by any politician of his generation, but he has something else that few identified early enough but most see,



only after it was too late. He is unfettered by morals; he is as much a street fighter as Obasanjo, and anything Obasanjo could do, Tinubu could do better.

Obasanjo is your archetypical bully; he has no problem killing an ant with a sledgehammer. He will not waste time in shooting a messenger if he believes that the message would be detrimental to his own defined interest. Supporting Bola Ahmed Tinubu became a cause célèbre for Nigerians with progressive affiliations and pretensions. Tinubu's David had an army of pebble carriers and Goliath's army was so tired of Obasanjo's manifest hypocrisy that they were willing to show David how to dance around Goliath's flailing arms. It was in this cauldron that the *Jagaban* mystique was born.

As Obasanjo's hold on power weakened, and he left office, Tinubu consolidated his own pavers by successfully installing his successor Babatunde Raji Fashola, in office. In the game of succession planning, Tinubu is the master of the game, while Obasanjo has failed woefully on every occasion that he had been given the opportunity.

The 2007 elections across Southwest marked a critical point in how we got to this sorry pass, how and why the power concentric have been thrown off balance and why we are back where we are at this time.

Obasanjo's single defying characteristics is his hypocrisy. I was nine years old and in primary school when he came to power. I grew up with *Operation Feed the Nation* posters defacing every corner of Inalende. I woke up to radio jingles exhorting the populace to go back to the farm. Obasanjo was



always on the television pontificating about the coming agricultural revolution. He was part and parcel of my early consciousness, and he had a lot to say on almost every subject. By the time the civilians came, the Unity Party of Nigeria was the party of my grandparents with whom I grew up, and of everyone else that I knew. It was heresy to be a National Party of Nigeria (NPN) person in my part of town, and Obasanjo was said to be an NPN man. What further proof was required, seeing as he “gave power” to the Hausa? My youthful thoughts were that simple. Obasanjo was the Yoruba 'bastard', our very own Quisling. The Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) did a very effective job of branding Obasanjo; he was a persona non grata in my youth.

As I grew into my teenage years, Obasanjo faded from public consciousness except for his occasional and well-timed populist pretensions that came out sporadically. But he was a man without any constituency, and the discerning largely ignored his protestations. But he was an enduring irritant to Abacha, who happily clamped him in jail and from whom he only escaped by the grace of God, with his life.

Obasanjo's stifling hypocrisy was in full array as he sought a 3rd term, subverting the constitution in his attempts, and squandering any goodwill his prisons years might have bought him. I was by this time completely detached from any form of political activism, but I grew an Afro in protest. Indeed, it is to Obasanjo that I owe the Afro that I have grown since 2006, with me shaving only on the 29th of May 2007, as Obasanjo left office diminished by his hypocrisy.



As Obasanjo diminished himself, Tinubu, the astute politician that he is, built himself up, and positioned himself as the de facto opposition leader in Nigeria.

The Action Congress of Nigeria emerged in that season and took on board those pushed out of People's Democratic Party by the rampaging Obasanjo. As ACN's ranks swelled, the PDP was bleeding. But the major gains by Tinubu were strategic, largely went unnoticed until it was too late and, remains largely unarticulated till date.

The People's Democratic Party governors that rode to power on Obasanjo's coat-tails in 2003, had been mostly properly defined as crooked and incompetent; and viewed against the backdrop of Tinubu's well-managed and oiled public *personae*, the slick media coverage and propaganda machine, they stood no chance.

A correct analysis of the halcyon days of Obasanjo's 3rd term madness would show that his loss in credibility became Tinubu's stepping stone into what he is today. The period afforded him (Tinubu) the opportunity to decimate all forms of internal opposition to his own hegemony, and his position as the leader of the opposition. Dissenting voices were either frustrated out of the political space, forced into joining yet more ineffectual lesser parties, or corralled into the already discredited People's Democratic Party. By the dawn of 2007 elections, Bola Ahmed Tinubu had begun to reap the investment in his strategic decision to take the battle to his enemies rather than wait for them to come to him.



Bola Ahmed Tinubu financed opposition against the People's Democratic Party governors of the South West states; he kept them too busy fighting for survival in their own states that they were of little help to the PDP in Lagos. He let Aregbesola loose in Osun State... Aregbe was the commissioner of works in Lagos State when he took on then Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola with his Oranmiyan Foundation. The PDP's internal contradictions, and Obasanjo's insufferable hypocrisy, killed them in Oyo State; Ondo and Ekiti State fell in much the same manner. Oshiomhole's embrace of Action Congress of Nigeria and his eventual victory brushed Tinubu's leadership credential but his victory was largely thanks to Obasanjo's strategic error of judgement, and his inability to plan a succession beyond the illegitimate and alternately demystifying 3rd term project.

With Obasanjo out of way, and his successor largely manoeuvred by some deft judicial pirouettes, Tinubu took back what the crooked electoral system took, using the instrumentality of a judiciary that is just as crooked. *Ole gbe, Ole gba* -- One robber is robbed by another robber. And the Action Congress of Nigeria numbers swelled.

The PDP began its journey towards its inevitable extinction as a power capturing juggernaut while Tinubu began to brand himself as the new Awolowo. He even had *Ghandic* pretensions; I saw the billboard around this time.

As Yar'Adua's illness took hold, and the PDP reeled around helplessly, without clear leadership beyond the self-interest noises from Turai Yar'Adua (then first lady) and her cabal, Obasanjo, ever so grateful to bury the man he had



single-handed ruffed into power, upon the failure of his agenda, began to promote the ascending Goodluck Ebele Jonathan.

Jonathan is Obasanjo's legacy to Nigeria. His run to the presidency of Nigeria is through the instrumentality of Obasanjo. He became the 'god' of Bayelsa by the grace of God and the instrumentality of Obasanjo. His road to the Vice Presidency also came via the same route. We are all aware of how he became President upon Yar'Adua's death; so, I will not bore you with how he won in his own right in 2011. Obasanjo was at the centre of Jonathan's political trajectory. But Tinubu was building a monster franchise as they all allowed themselves to be distracted.



(XII)

A Democracy without Change

‘

*Ours is a democracy that is not anchored
on the expressed wish of the citizens*

AS the 2015 elections drew near, the choices facing Nigerians were very stark. At the centre, it was a clear choice between Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari. History will record that whilst I could not even contemplate voting for Jonathan, I also did not believe Buhari to be an alternative. I skipped voting in the Presidential elections, and I was also going to skip the gubernatorial elections as well. Such was the depth of my conviction that none of the candidates possessed the necessary capacity. I did not vote for any candidate in the presidential elections, but the gubernatorial elections changed my perception of the problem; and catalysed my current engagements in the political space.

Prince Ademola Adeniji Adele (deceased), a man of immense political sagacity, read the excerpt that was published in *The Guardian* and called me for a meeting. I had known *Papa* since I met him during the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) years and was drawn into his circle by his brother-in-law, Saheed Salawe, my friend. Upon his release from Kaduna prison in 1995, Papa and myself disagreed strenuously on tactics and methodologies, but we agree on a lot of conclusion we both drew about the need to



truly define Nigeria. At the meeting, he told me of his association with Jimi Agbaje campaign; he shared his ideas with me, as well as his plans for his candidate. I expressed deep concerns about his candidate and the damaged platform from which he sought the office and we parted, agreeing to, as usual, disagree. As always, he was the indulgent older brother, who would not presume to force his opinion on anyone.

His involvement with Jimi Agbaje, and my deep dislike for the All Progressives Congress_leadership, forced me to start considering a vote for Agbaje, in spite of the language of his People's Democratic Party platform. The *Oba* of Lagos intemperate vituperations on the Igbo population of Lagos, finally pushed me over the top, and I made up my mind to vote for Agbaje if only to poke my finger in the eye of the bear. I wanted to see the *Olowo Eko's* candidate humbled, and his patron demystified.

I penned a "*Letter to Lagosians*" and sent same to Papa for onward transmission to Agbaje. I was convinced that the letter would emerge and ensure that the Igbo and any other person, who might have been turned off the gubernatorial election by Jonathan's loss, or by the various threats, were sufficiently mobilised and galvanised into action. The letter was never released; and the moment passed. I hated the All Progressives Congress_platform enough to go out to vote for Jimi Agbaje.

My wife and my mother voted Ambode.

My eyes opened at that point.



Ours is a democracy devoid of choice. My wife, mother, close friends and colleagues at work, all largely voted for All Progressives Congress_if not unanimously. They had heard me argue against the manifest corruption of the Tinubu hegemony, they had equally come to me with their own observations and frustrations with the system. They knew all the reasons why I would not vote for Ambode, but they still voted for him anyway. They moan in the years of endless traffic whilst the concession games endured, and the long queues they daily endured as they pay to be allowed to go to the schools, hospitals, commercial enterprises that engage their daily existence; yet they voted to continue with the same party that has all but *ghetto-rised* their communities and erected gateways for the transfer of their sweat into avaricious pockets; men who being uncontended with privatising the public purse, were now rifting through our very pockets with leprous fingers.

My wife's vote for All Progressives Congress rankled, and as I asked how she could possibly bring herself to do so, she also asked how I could expect her not to? I got much the same response from my mother, and my partners in the Law offices. There were no arguments about the demerits of retaining the Tinubu hegemony, but all asked me to name the alternatives. This has led me into a critical examination of our democracy; how it offers no genuine choice to the citizens who are locked into a vicious cycle, caught between the thinking thieves and the unthinking thieves, especially now that the lines have been completely blurred by the emergence of the All Progressives



Congress, and the implosion of the People's Democratic Party. Assuming, but not conceding, that Mr. Jimi Agbaje meant well, and truly desired to change Lagos State and rescue it from the claws of the *Jagaban* and his merry band, what other platforms could he have run on; how much of an impact could he have made, and what differences, if any, could that have made to the outcome?

Jimi Agbaje has an impeccable progressive credential. He has served as National Treasurer of Afenifere, he was a foundation member of Alliance for Democracy (AD). I don't know the story, but he has refused to be tainted by association with the *Jagaban*; he has dared to be his own man in an environment where several have serially debased themselves and eaten their own vomit. He ran in 2001 under the relatively unknown DPA (Democratic People's Alliance), he was beloved by several Lagosians, but most believed he lost because he lacked a formidable platform behind him. He ran on the People's Democracy Party platform, and he still lost.

This fixation on the platform is a by-product of the *kwashiokorised* democracy evolving in our country. Ours is a democracy that is not anchored on the expressed wish of the citizens. We have an unknown number of citizens; we have little or no way of empowering the voters to the point where the sovereign will of the State is predicated on a clear expression of the peoples' will, in periodic elections. The holder of the Presidency still has too much power over the outcome of elections at the federal levels, and so do the governors, in the conduct of local government elections.



Agbaje in my view had no choice but to run on the discredited People's Democratic Party platform. That is the consequence of a democracy without choice.

Even I am not immune to the illogicality of a choice-less democracy. My abstinence from voting in the Presidential elections, and, subsequent emotive decision to vote for Jimi Agbaje, are only reflective of the paucity of choices forced on the Nigerian people.



(XIII)

It's Just A Penny?

Problem is leadership, damn it!



*Without a commonly accepted vision,
Nigeria will never become what it/she has
the capacity, and the destiny, to be*

WHEN I pick up the average Nigerian Newspaper, I am pretty confident that I know who paid for what story, or news item. My knowledge of my society -- the cancerous nature of our corruption, the pervasiveness of virulent corruption in the press, as with all other expressions of our lives -- helps cement this truth. I read Nigerian print and online media with alert; a nuclear grade, bullshit filter.

To read the above, you'd be pardoned if you were left with the impression that I had somehow left out the television and radio journalists; nothing can be further from the truth. If you look to either medium as the primary sources of information, you have become a victim of weaponised ignorance. Bar an almost negligible minority, the Nigerian television and radio stations are owned lock, stock, and barrel by the very oppressors of the people; persons beholden to them; men available for sale; and, or, businesses amenable to persuasion. They report news without forgetting to be careful not to offend those who pay the piper.



To be informed, I turn to the western and eastern press. I listen to *Al Jazeera*, CNN, BBC; I try my best to watch *Fox News*, whenever I am in places where their patently American perspectives are tolerated and broadcast. I watch and listen to these lot, but I do so with not only my, yes, you can guess, atomic grade, bullshit filter, I do so without ever forgetting that they are telling me my story from their often racist, ignorant, and jaundiced perspectives.

"It's just a penny?" Richard Quest exclaimed! If you watch CNN, you've seen the trailer pushing Quest's show, but I will not spare you a rehash of the story it tells. It is important for the window it opens into how we are seen; why we are seen like that, and what is required if we are to change the unflattering but truthful viewpoint it communicates.

A "black" woman, the very symbol of African fecundity, dropped a penny. Richard Quest, the very image of WASP prudence, picked up the penny, called her attention to the dropped coin.... It's a banking hall, you could see my beautiful African queen dismissively asserts, "it's just a penny". In the banking hall, you see the Chinese, Korean, or Japanese guy, the one with the briefcase of valuables; then the vault into which Quest flicks the African penny, to keep the company of his bullions. And then he delivers the master class on why the African age may never dawn. I have always hated this trailer.

Vision constrains leaders. When leadership is unrestrained by vision, resources are wasted, and purpose is corrupted. The central cause of retardation in Nigeria is the absence of a



common vision behind which the people may be united; and in the absence of a national vision all manner of perverse, evil, wicked, and corrupt visions are being pursued. Obasanjo Farms Nigeria lives on, even as OFN died, The Bells Schools thrives, even as UI decays, and Obasanjo Presidential Library bespeaks the excellence that was once promised by the National Theatre.

I came across a picture of Dubai in 1994, and the Dubai of today, which looks like tomorrow on a friend's *Facebook* page, and I was reminded of Quest's admonitions; and *Habakkuk 2: 2-3*, came to mind. If you seek knowledge, read it. It's not my remit to evangelize.

Visionary leadership is the difference between the Dubai of old, and the Nigeria of today, and yesteryear. Visionary leadership is why the house of Saud no longer comes to UCH; the very one in Ibadan as was once the case in the 1960s. Today, our presidents and eminences are frequent guests of foreign hospitals. Vision explains why the Malaysians export vegetable oils to Nigeria today when it was from our shores; they took away the seedlings.

It's just a penny? I'm sure. It explains why we would borrow from China what we just frittered away on inanities. Just think of all the pennies we've thrown away, and are still throwing away.



(XIV)

The Lazy Youth...

‘

*...yes, the youth are lazy, but it has taken
several irresponsible fathers to condition
them to be the way they are...*

WRITE this in an Uber car on my way to the Ikeja High Court to keep a date, I'd rather be spared. We'll talk about that some other time. I have something more urgent to share with you, and I ask that you take off your partisan hats.

When the president made his rightly derided comments on the indolence of our youth, he was mostly right in describing the ailments, my grouses were with his refusal to correctly identify the cause. That is without prejudice to my belief that he is also guilty of victim blaming.

But back to my Uber ride.

There's nothing particularly remarkable about the young man driving me. His car is also the usual type you'd find 'doing' Uber -- a Toyota Corolla. But the unremarkable car smells clean. The driver doesn't smell; he is well groomed. I hate bad odours; I value clean air.

He started driving, and he reminded me of Yakubu. If you knew Yakubu, you'll understand that this is about as high a praise as anyone would get off me for driving skills, but to fill that man's shoes, he'd have to be more honest a man than many I have met. May God rest Yakubu's soul. Amen.



Intrigued by his driving capacity and assurance behind the wheel, I began to talk to, and, with, him. At least until I broke off the conversation to type this piece, and to allow him concentrate on his driving. Now, we're heading out to 3rd Mainland Bridge, out of Lekki traffic.

His name is Tunde, 31 years old. He speaks barely passable English, even though he “passed” his GCE, and was only denied a tertiary education because of his parents' inability to fund the quest. He lives in Mushin; he is single and has no '*baby mama*' or mamas. I see an earnest, working youth, I probed further.

What do you want to do with your life? I asked. His response is what has provoked this piece.

Tunde wants to “go abroad”. To do what? He shrugged in response; and proceeded to tell me about the huge army of cousins he has in the US. In fact, one just got his visa last week. I am sure with prayers and fasting, perhaps with a little ingenuity, Tunde's miracle shall also come.

So, what are you trained to do? What trade did you learn when you couldn't complete your education? Tunde learnt no trade; has no skills. I looked at him with pains in my heart; I told him the fate that awaits him, and the like of him. I have been there. I have seen it before. I have the battle scars to prove my cred.

A life of toil, misery, and pains, awaits the unskilled illegal immigrant. That the illegal immigrant is both unskilled and black, practically seals his fate, and it would take unbelievable grace for him to be spared a fate dissimilar to



slavery, and arguably more harrowing. There's no owner to house and feed him; those basics are virtual luxuries to the unskilled, and illegal African immigrant.

When the system failed to provide a pathway to formal education; what if anything has ever been done to offer training in the trades and crafts? How are the youth meant to find employment when they have been trained to be indolent? There's a huge army of francophone Africans and Ghanaian artisans earning their living in Nigeria, but you'd be hard-pressed to find skilled Nigerian labour at any trade. Our young men are the most hit. The few that have managed to get trained in spite of the clear abandonment by the dysfunctional system, what has the state done to help them grow?

In the absence of a national vision for our youth, negative outlets have been found by ingenious minds, and you must wonder about what the future holds for the coming generations. Without lofty heights to aspire to, and in an environment shorn of heroism, the youth have become existential in their world view; they are happy to do anything to "make it".

When I was done telling Tunde what economic exile as an illegal African immigrant entails, he had no response to offer me. But even as I know that I am correct in my analysis and conclusions, I couldn't help but ask myself, the same question several Tundes have asked of themselves before embarking on their Saharan odyssey: what choices are left for those who stay?



Many Tundes have weighed their options; they have died trying to get out. Yes, others made it out and are living the nightmare I have sought to describe, yet more are working in the army of the living dead, doing everything and anything to survive. The vast majority have become vacuously religious, and are daily engaged in seeking to con the God unknown for the miracles they need to survive.

Codeine, Tramadol, Marijuana, Glue, Soakaway pits -- these offer temporary insanity as escape from the painful realities of their hopeless existence, and the betting apps and kiosks abound to offer illusory hope.

I have long bid Tunde goodbye, and I type this stuck in traffic and in another Uber. My driver is another youth, also in his prime, but this time, I'm holding my tongue. His car stinks. He is a lazy but working youth; another victim of a visionless state.

So, yes, the youth are lazy. But it has taken several irresponsible fathers to condition them to be the way they are, and a most insensitive father to call them what they have been conditioned to become.

Knowing how lazy you have all become, and just how difficult it is to get you to read long articles, I shall leave you to ponder the future of a country with a huge population of untrained, entitled, and drug-addicted youth.



PART 11

SECTION 3



The Way Forward....



“

*The route to nationhood is in the
proposed restructuring
and the change in governance system
Nigeria, the Way Forward...*



‘

...our problems as a State has its root in the governing system and the superstructure of the state, and; whilst there are certainly other problems to be tackled, a fix to the system is required before we may begin the journey of nationhood.

I WILL not bore anyone with the sad tale of how we got here, or from where we have journeyed. We are all painfully familiar with that story. But we all as a people, most and generally agree, that we need to get away from where we are and chart a different path for ourselves.

It is my belief that our problems have their roots in the governing system and the superstructure of the State, and; whilst there are certainly other problems to be tackled, a fix to the system is required before we may begin the journey of nationhood.

Nigeria must be restructured along regional lines. At the foundation of the Nigeria State, there were three regions; there was also the clear understanding that more regions would be created out of the existing three. Indeed, the *Willinks Commission for the Protection of the Minorities* recommended this.

The Western Region, further to this recommendation, duly created the Midwest in 1963; the expectations were that



the other two regions would have additional regions created out of them for the minority groups trapped therein. This was not to be until the military aborted the First Republic in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy of the first coup of 1966.

If the first coup set back the journey towards the creation of more regions; the second effectively destroyed the federal structure of the State, and saw to the creation of a unitary system, with the military command and control structure being forced on the Nigeria State. Nigeria became a federation only in name but has over the last 50 years plus become steadily unitary.

With the imposition of a unitary system and the increased centralisation of power; the parliamentary system of government, which is what was agreed at the dawn of Nigeria Independence and, practised before then, was jettisoned in favour of the American Presidential system of government. Evidence of the failure of these twin anomalies are readily available to be seen today.

I propose that Nigeria reverts to a regional structure. There is a general consensus that has existed before Independence, and which has been cemented by the report of the constitutional conferences held under the auspices of several governments; that Nigeria should be governed by a six-regional structure. This is my recommendation.

I propose that Nigeria should revert to the parliamentary system of government at both the regional and federal levels of government. I am of the firm opinion that the federal government has no business with local government, either



with the delineation or creation; it should be up to the regions to decide how to structure internally.

I believe that there should be a reversion to the revenue allocation and revenue derivation policies in place at the dawn of Independence; that the only tweak should be to allow for the creation of an interventionist funds to be available for the amelioration of the emergencies wrought by the wars in different parts of Nigeria, to the tragedy of environmental disasters in the Niger Delta.

These views are by no means exhaustive, and I am sure that by the time we all might have contributed our thoughts; we'd be closer to a more coherent and workable plan. I believe that the key to a route to nationhood lies in the proposed restructuring and the change in governance system.

‘

*The route to nationhood is in the
proposed restructuring
and the change in governance system*

NB: Please, see the proposed new Constitution in Appendix



PART 11

SECTION 4

SUNDRY OTHER ITEMS



Purgation

&

Resolve

“

*The day I died was the
day I was freed of my
last vestige of fear*



EPILOGUE



(I)

Do Not Die in their Wars



Our national penchant for talking a revolution whilst outsourcing the sacrifices required, has led us into a democracy barren of choice.

I HAD resolved to watch the coming elections with some sense of detachment for a season. There was nothing to be excited about. I was going to vote for General Buhari if he got on the presidential ballot; and for Jimi Agbaje as governor of Lagos, whichever platform he chose to run on. I expected GMB to lose, but I had hoped that Agbaje would win. So simple were my thoughts, but they have since evolved. If I would bother to vote, these remain my choices; but I shall not be voting in the coming elections.

The mood of the country is depressed. Our President is an uninspiring, dour and colourless man. He inspires no confidence in anybody. He is surrounded by comical people who have little understanding of how to appear sober, temperate; or presidential. Nobody appears to be responsible for the ship of State, which is glaringly on course to hit a reef



any time from now even as it is buffeted by pirate ships and dangerous waves.

Goodluck Ebele Jonathan presided over the current manifestation of the corrupt system that has always produced the political leadership of the Nigeria State.

Jonathan became the Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State under the kleptocratic regime of Alams (Alamieyeseigha). His capacity to keep quiet; and be loyal to those who appoint him to office not his cerebral capacity, competence, and, or integrity, qualified him for that office.

GEJ became the Governor of Bayelsa courtesy of an extreme perversion of democratic norms by Obasanjo, '*St. Mahews*' of Owu — the conscienceless conscience of our ro en nation. Our elders in Yorubaland of whom Baba Aremu, should be an honoured member, were it not for his planet-sized ego, and inherent selfishness, have a saying, "*llé tí aḡi itó mọ, ìrì ní yòò wo*".

Baba Aremu presumed to install a puppet government that he would control from his crypt in Abeokuta, but he forgot yet another one of our elders' sayings, "*a fi ọba jẹ, òhun ló ñdi ọḡá Oba*".

OBJ's insufferable hypocrisy, which has seen him in his 70s, begin a rabid pursuit of wealth, when he ought to have dedicated himself to the redefinition of our country, led him into a collision course with the puppet government he presumed to have left behind. Yar A'dua moved early in his regime to be rid of OBJ's influence, and GEJ has bruised his ego the most.



GEJ is OBJ's legacy to Nigeria. The one man who has been singularly blessed to have the opportunity to lead our nation at two critical junctions in our history, bequeathed the GEJ presidency to Nigerians. It is important to make this point, because yet again, OBJ is up to his usual games, and in his latest adventure, he has found allies in usual, but hitherto disguised places. Common cause has occasioned strange alliances and the darkening clouds demand this alarm.

The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria presides over the most extensive criminal enterprise known to modern civilization. The constitution does not derive its legitimacy from the expressed will of its captured people, and functionaries of the amoral State abridge citizenship rights in the most violent way. This will remain the case when votes would be cast on February 14.

The Inspector General would remain the Honourable Justice Inspector General of the Nigeria Police; the men in uniform take their cues from him, and he's the one in charge of the guns deployed to protect us during the elections. That man -- and it does not matter who he is, every IGP in the sad history of our country has acted in exactly the same manner for as long as they are products of the President's benevolence -- will be the same on February 14.

The INEC, that same one, that has not managed to register all eligible citizens, has already disenfranchised millions of Nigerians, and; has shown a sad inability to conduct the most basic of tasks... the same one peopled by the same corrupt Nigerians, same as you and I, that will be guarded by the same police, that will be under the same IGP, that will answer



to the same president, will now conduct an election, that will announce a result, pronouncing defeat for the incumbent president of this blighted land on February 14?

The PDP is the APC, and the APC is the PDP. The presence of Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT) and his own monster franchise is the magnet that has unified strange bedfellows, but as our elders would say, *“ikú ñde dèdèrè, dèdèrè nàà ñde ikú”*.

BAT knows that GEJ would win, but he is hoping that the popular demand for change -- mostly the mantra of the middle class impoverished by GEJ's incompetence, and the extreme mis-governance of states such as Lagos, which is his cash cow... would distract attention from the 16 years of his sovereignty over Lagos State. In the noise generated by the GMB propaganda mouthed as “change,” nobody is asking APC to run on its own record.

Eight years of Babatunde Raji Fashola (BRF), preceded by eight years of BAT with the vast amounts received in taxes, what has it birthed for Lagosians beyond the paparazzi and razzmatazz? They have built gardens in the middle of the expressways, and they call them Parks; they proclaim that “Lagos is working” but the question is, for who? Who has had the space to ask them to account for the several tollgates with which they have imprisoned the inhabitants of Lekki? At what costs have they pretended to rebuild the roads in Ikeja GRA? What is the true cost of the many anti-people policies of the APC government of Lagos State, and at what cost have lies been deified?



In 2011, per his own admission, BAT cut a deal with GEJ, and then pulled away from then AC Presidential candidate Nuhu Ribadu. Would he be cutting a deal again?

GEJ, Obasanjo, Tinubu, Lamido, possibly GMB — they share common knowledge of a fact: GEJ will win the coming “elections! Why would Obasanjo fight GEJ if he knows he would win? It's about his own ego, his perennial need to be the messiah. *Saint Matthew* is guilty of every crime he today accuses GEJ of, and GEJ as said before, is OBJ's legacy to us. Or could the General have a far more sinister agenda? With Babangida's recent declarations in Minna, could the generals be calling out their boys?

OBJ is an extremely intelligent and self-disciplined human being, especially in areas he has identified as being of interest to him. He senses the mood of the nation for change, he realises that his legacy would be indelibly destroyed if he comes to be identified with GEJ, and he is tapping into the discontent, in order to burnish his own sullied image and to preserve his own vainglorious views of his legacy.

GMB! He reminds me of the folk song accompanying the Yoruba fable of the elephant's coronation, “*A ó ò m'érin jò ba, èwèkú èwèlẹ*”. GMB, a man so simple in his views of the complex issues facing Nigeria, to the point that he presumed to cut a deal with all manner of unsavoury characters, in his bid to garner their endorsement in his quest to lead Nigeria. GMB, the same one for whom I was going to vote just a few weeks ago, is a very simple, idealistic but not adequately informed on critical issues in today's polity.



He has occupied that office before; he failed in the simplest of his duties —to preserve himself in office. He was so colourless that IBB did not even deem him sufficiently deserving of death, because trust me, if he was a threat, Ibrahim would have arranged something for him. He is so rare a breed amongst his peers that even the kleptomaniacal Abacha tapped him up to head the PTF in order to burnish his own image and; his presence in that agency gave it the semblance of temperance and probity.

GMB lacks personal conviction to the point where he would make statements that have today become albatrosses on his neck, and damaged him irreparably in the eyes of a significant chunk of our citizenry. Yet he today disavows his own words, and his records would not support the charges of bigotry. Who is the real GMB? Will the real GMB please stand up?

GMB has not sparked, talk less of kindling the fire of the Nigerian spirit that chased out IBB, but was ultimately aborted. His quest for the presidency is based on an illusory “change” being sold to the Nigerian people, whom they (GMB’s promoters) have assumed will endure regardless of whichever one of them “wins the election”. GMB has become the dry cleaner, the laundryman washing away the stench of corruption that taints all his principal sponsors.

The illusion of change is being marshalled using the instrumentality of the social media, and the Internet. Facile theses are piled on top of each other, and silly attempts are made to distinguish between the two sets of dark forces that have held our country hostage for these years. Men who until



recently were sworn enemies, have become compatriots overnight, and strange bedfellows have emerged. A founding father of the ruling party is suddenly talking about the 16 years of PDP misrule; IBB presumes to speak on our behalf, and OBJ is suddenly the conscience of our sick nation!!!

The armies of keyboard warriors have no voter's cards with which to vote! Majority of the ones who have will walk away once GEJ's goons execute his agenda. Yet a good number are Nigerians in the Diaspora, ensconced in the uncomfortable comfort of exile, and yearning for the best for the motherland, preaching ideals of western capitalist democracies. The Nigerian press, is not divorced from the people themselves, forced into the rabid rat race of existential living and generally devoid of principles and ideals, its conscience purchased with envelopes of varying sizes depending on office. Our national penchant for talking a revolution whilst outsourcing the sacrifices required, has led us into a democracy barren of choice. How do you reconcile a vote for Agbaje with Bode George lurking in the shadows? A democracy devoid of choice!

From stringers to publishers, the 4th Estate is lost; were it not lost, how come nobody is asking the pertinent questions and shouting directions? What happened to seal the lips of those who used to enquire? Who is watching the watchmen? What kind of society are we building? What has made it possible for ordinarily intelligent men and women to become imbecilic in their intellectual capacities? How did we end up in this sorry place, where State failure has become a real possibility in our own lifetime? There is enough maleficence



to go around all parts of our sick society; our press continues to promote lies in place of truth. Yet, the conscience is an open wound that only the truth can heal.

Assuming by some miracle GMB wins the coming election, and GEJ and his backers are somehow persuaded or compelled to bow out to popular will, due to pressure from internet, press and public opinion; what next? Nothing will change. The same corrupt governors and their godfathers would remain under the same corrupt system with the same corrupt legislators, judiciary, police, and; same castrated army.

The illusion of change will be for a season. Very soon, GMB would be allowed his rants against “corruption” – as defined by his own ultimately narrow interpretation of the word; and his handlers would probably allow him the occasional victim to be fed to the lions in what would soon become the circus of anti-corruption. But in that critical battle, all anyone needs to do is take a look at the high-table at any political gathering of either of the major parties. The general has lost the war against corruption before it even began.

The Nigerian middle class has been a resounding disappointment, and its failure to rise above existential living, replacing intellectual curiosity with vacuous religiosity devoid of conviction, has accentuated the pervasive corruption of the political class. The very best amongst us have never aspired for political leadership, we are too good



to be local government councillors, and; too big to run for the Houses of Assemblies. Only the 'corrupt' go to the House of Reps, and the Senate; it's not for those with anything to do. We have as a class failed ourselves, our children, and generations yet unborn. We have abandoned governance to the worst of us, and we have watched them move from being councillors to assemblymen; we've seen men without desire for service promoted to high offices because we are all too big to serve the only nation we call home. As they did between 1982-1999, they're coming for you again.

Whichever of them wins, I implore Nigerians, please, do not die in their war. Resist all invitations to violence. If you have your voter's card, please vote, but vote knowing that it probably wouldn't matter anyway, especially in the presidential elections. But it is not too late to prepare to use all the other elections across the country as barometers for the performance of the incumbents, from State House of Assembly to Representatives, Governors and Senators.

The problem will not be solved by a mere change of personnel, it is the system itself that requires reformation, and the nation itself that has to be redefined with the rights of its citizens clearly delineated and held sacrosanct. In 1992, MKO tapped into a national desire for change. He energised a movement that became larger than him. He became the symbol of a young generation of Nigerians; I was one of those who voted in the most peaceful election ever witnessed in the history of this potentially great nation. There was no war in



any of its territories, and there was not any part of its territory ceded to a terrorist.

Some betrayed the ideals of nationhood that were sown on that blessed day. From the minute of conception, they knew who was, and who wasn't the messiah. Yet they often stood on June 12, and have traded and prospered while sitting on it. They are the same people who presume to call us to their battles again.

I beseech you; do not die in their wars. Today they are in PDP; if APC should assume office tomorrow, they will move to APC; and if PDP and GEJ should win, they will remember their PDP genes. They are one and the same.

Do not die in their war.

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(II)

The Day I Died...



*To die in the service and pursuit of truth,
is to become immortal.*

*To stand up against the amoral, wicked,
and unjust governing system of Nigeria,
and to die in the struggle to replace the
evil system with a more equitable
and just one, would be to have died well*

IT'S funny, the tricks time and perspectives play on a dead man's memory. I cannot now remember the date. But of what use are dates, or time for that matter, to the dead? It was the day that I died.

It was just another day at the office. It must have been late February or early March. I know this because I remember that I was preoccupied with thoughts of my then impending 50th birthday, and I recall that it was a little over a month before that date.

I had as usual called my darling wife before leaving the office. There was some arrangement for my favourite dish of *Egusi* and pounded yam in place, and I called the wife as much in keeping with our habit of many years, as well as to assure that the music of the mortar and pestle would not commence until I was safely out of the unpredictable Lekki traffic. The



Ijesha blood in my veins abhors cold pounded yam!

The neatly choreographed pounded yam was delivered by Iya Wale on schedule, and food was served as I slipped into my Arabic gown, the *jellabia*.

Now you see, the passage of time has ensured that my children have succeeded in chasing me out of the main living room and dining section of the house, and I have become increasingly constrained to my own room, where I have been fighting an increasingly lost battle to retain the right to the small writing desk/dining table, and at least a portion of my own bed.

The pounded yam was excellent. Every visit to the plate for a morsel invited a struggle with the mound, to follow. Such was the smoothness and viscosity of the yam that my spirit prayed for my mother's maid, who I knew was the pounder, and for my mum, for her supervision, and perhaps, personal involvement in the orchestra of the mortar. When my cook came up with the stew; I made a point to thank him for the *Egusi* soup that he contributed to the meal. I then called my mother to thank her for the pounded yam, and to ask that she passed on my gratitude to her maid, for the sterling effort on the yam.

Well and thoroughly satisfied, I bellowed for my ward, 'Timileyin to come to my room and pack the dishes. I then stood up to do something; what it was, I cannot now remember. But the moment I stood up I knew something was amiss. I did not feel right. I lay on my bed for what must have been a li le under a minute. Timileyin's knocks at the door and



entry made me attempt to stand up. The last words I said were “I don't feel right...”

Then I died!!!

“Daddy Igbayi!” Timileyin was yelling. I opened my eyes to find Timileyin bent over me. I was on the floor between the window and my bed. I was too weak to stand; I could barely talk as I started gathering my wits about me. My upper left hand was bruised; other than that, I appeared physically fine. I did a quick tongue roll as prescribed by the many emails warning about the proper thing to do in cases of a stroke, and, concluded that I hadn't suffered a stroke.

When I was 31 years old, I was diagnosed as being hypertensive, and one of the ill effects was what was at the time said to be an “enlarged left ventricle;” I was then placed on anti-hypertension drugs. The story of how God cured me of the illness would be told another day; but the condition was completely reversed; and, I was taken off the hypertension drugs before my 35th birthday. The first thing I did upon getting off the floor was asked that my blood pressure monitor be brought for me.

I stood there bewildered at what had just befallen me, a soon to be 50 years old! The fittest I have ever been in my life though not a sports person. In my youth, my grandmother ensured that I did not forget that every crippled beggar was a budding footballer until they were permanently injured playing the game. When my mates were playing football in the *agboole*, Oladele would be found playing *Ayo Olopon* with my grandparents and my grandfather's other wives and their



friends. Without having been exposed to football as a kid, it was easier to gravitate towards books, and I grew up a couch potato. I began to pay attention to my personal fitness as I approached my 40th birthday, and the benefit is that I am fitter at 50s than I was, in my 20s and 30s.

My surprise soon gave way to a mixture of annoyance with myself, and queries for God:

How could I have died like this?

Haha! Die in my bedroom at 49?

How?

I would die happy if I would have died for some ideals; the truth, in defence of my principles and beliefs. But to expire in my bedroom, in my prime...?

I thanked God for sparing my life.

The day I died was a good day. It was the day I lost whatever residual fear I might have had for death. It was the very day I learnt to embrace my destiny.

When I was checked out by the doctors and the all clear was given, I came to realise that God merely reminded me that I wouldn't be living forever; that I am a creature in time, and I would be dying someday; that I should make hay, and do whatever I have been given to do, and; to quit worrying about what mortal men might do to my physical body. Every man would die one day or the other.

The day I died, was not the day of my death.

For those who would kill a man for the truth he tells, I ask that they consider the words of Patrick Wilmot: ...the truth of



man is not dissolved in his blood. To die in the service and pursuit of truth is to become immortal. To stand up against the amoral, wicked, and unjust governing system of Nigeria, and to die in the struggle to replace the evil system with a more equitable and just one, would be to have died well.

The day I died was the day I was freed of my last vestige of fear.



LAST NOTE

Bury Me Like A Hero



*The Nigeria State or its system has killed
be er men and women than me,
but I ask one thing of you, if they come for me,
and it pleases God to yield my life to them,
Bury Me Like A Hero*

MY generation grew up on the fictional works of James Hardly Chase, Harold Robbins and several other pulp fiction writers. The more desperate bookworms would sometimes use the spy tales wri en under the by-line of Nick Carter, and about a James Bond-like character going by the same name.

Nick Carter's novels were considered too rich in tall tales to appeal to more serious readers in my generation. He never seemed to get anything wrong; the narrative was always focused on sex; you could count on him to offer some pornographic description of one of his many conquests of the Soviet beauty, whom he always used, to fulfil his espionage assignments.

Nick Carter was indestructible.

In the mid 80s, a story started doing the rounds: Nick Carter was killed in a new novel, and the title was "*Bury Me Like A Hero.*" A lot of fiction aficionados in my generation



searched for copies of the fictional works in a manner not dissimilar to what the quest for the Golden Fleece must have been. After years of searching for this fictional work, it became clear that no such work was ever published, but the title would serve me just true, for the purpose of this part of my narrative.

Obafemi Awolowo

May 9th, 1987, whilst on exile at the University of Ibadan campus, squatting with Adeyinka Aderinto, an Abadina Primary school classmate, now a professor in the same university, news filtered into the campus that “Awo,” Obafemi Awolowo, had died. The grief was spontaneous, palpable, general and quite openly expressed. Rallies began spontaneously all over the campus.

I was all of 19 years old.

It was not my own school; I was serving my term out in the Ibadan varsity campus because the Lagos State University senate has rusticated me for a session. I had been a bad boy. I fought a female colleague and was kicked out for a session. But I got caught up in the occasion and became part of a massive movement of grieving students.

Speaker after speaker spoke glowingly about Obafemi Awolowo. The crowd became larger than anything I have ever seen, before or after, of a gathering of students, mourning the passage of a Nigerian leader -- I do not recall if anyone spoke up and called him a factional or tribal leader. The crowd must have decided on a candlelit procession because I remember that we moved as a sea through the campus; we sang dirges and solidarity songs, and we walked



through the connecting road and gate into the Polytechnic Ibadan.

The students of the polytechnic joined the ranks of mourning students, and this massive crowd of students moved through the city of Ibadan in a sorrowful procession, in honour of the fallen hero. We walked as far as Oke Bola, where Awolowo lived in his lifetime.

The procession must have started around 10pm; we did not return until day had begun to break.

Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo was buried as a hero. I never met him, but I walked for him. I met his visions, and I saw his works all around as I grew up. These are the same infrastructures that the parasitic inheritors, whose only goal in government is to privatise the fruits of the Awolowo visionary seeds, speak about as decaying, or decayed today. "*Awon ajo'gun ewu, ti ko mo iyi agbada n'la*". Inheritors without value for the inheritance, philistines given to consumption instead of creation.

My generation and several still unborn will yet celebrate the fecundity of Awolowo's imaginations, and the fruits they have borne, that the carpetbaggers are consuming, without planting new ones, and with nary a thought for the future.

Olufela Anikulapo-Kuti, (aka *Abami Eda*).

Him I knew and adored.

I came to Lagos in 1985. I was part of the second set of students admitted into Lagos State University.



One of my friends in “LASU alaaro” was a guy we called ‘*Shobby Yenyen.*’ Shobo was a Fela devotee; he had every song Fela ever sang on tape, and he could each without missing a beat. This was my introduction to Fela beyond the legends and myths that the *Arokean Boge* grew up hearing about the ‘*Abami*’ in my days growing up at Fiditi Grammar School, Olivet in Oyo, and OSCAS in Ife. You can thank ‘*Shobby yenyen*’ for my Fela addiction.

Fela’s several biographers have written tomes about the enigma he was; I am not remotely qualified to presume to regurgitate their several musings about the man. But I can tell you about what he meant to the like of me -- the young and the old -- numbering over a million, who buried him like the hero that he was, and still is.

Fela was born into a privileged background; into a family of lettered people in a country where most still have not been given access to basic electricity till date. Fela’s mother was the first woman to drive a car in Nigeria; he did not have to speak for a class into which he was not born. But speak he did, and sing he still does. Fela’s songs from the popular staples such as “*Zombie, Yellow Fever, Shuffering and Shmiling, Coffin for Head of State, Confusion Break Bone* etc.”, and less known masterpieces such as *Alhaji Alhaji, Akunnakuna - Senior brother of Parambulator, BBC, Chop and Clean Mouth* -- all unreleased till date -- spoke truth to power in his inimitable way.

Olufela suffered for his beliefs. He was beaten, imprisoned, impoverished and brutalised but he never wavered and he never sold out; even his traducers knew he



was not for sale and his followers never doubted his resolve. Fela lived and died for his beliefs.

On the day of Fela's burial, I was in school at the Lagos State University, at what we called L & H, and I observed a strange phenomenon that I am certain the records will reflect. The sun and the moon contested for space in the firmament, in broad daylight! A prophet sent to these shores had died and the *heavenlies* wanted to witness his internment. Or so I thought.

It took my brother, Taiwo Akinlami, to cure me of this delusion. Fela was not a prophet, he was simply a man who told the truth about a society that has refused to change, and by the refusal to change, Fela's words became a self-fulfilling prophecy, and in order for us to conceal our sins, and hide our shame, we have all invested Fela with the office of the prophet. We are the ones that have refused to change.

Fela did not leave a legacy of material wealth, even though he left material wealth behind. His house on Gbemisola Street in Ikeja is probably the only real estate he left behind, but Fela spoke truth to power in a manner not seen before his coming and unrivalled since his demise.

When he died in 1997, I was working to exit Lagos State University with my Law degree. I did not attend his funeral, but over a million Nigerians buried him as a hero.



I expect them to attack my finance and seek to damage my business interests as well as my reputation, but as Robert Nesta Marley famously said: *"who Jah bless, No man curse"*. I am not worried about their coming attacks, several men, who are better than me, have been similarly attacked in the past.

I have seen the Nigeria State in its many different manifestations, deliberately, overtly, and sometimes, covertly, snuff the life out of its own citizens. The State, or system -- take your pick, for they are the same -- killed its own, how much more its castigators.

Murtala Ramat Mohammed was killed by the Nigerian system whilst he was yet its Head of State. When you realise that Obasanjo succeeded him, you will have an idea of the system that produced him.

The system killed Ken Saro-Wiwa; his only sin was that he castigated the system. We even managed to coin a phrase for it: "Judicial Murder." The same State that would not talk to Ken, is today prostrate by militancy in the Niger Delta, speaking to men representative of no one beyond themselves, and possessing of neither vision nor ideological foundations. Another effort at buying more time for the unsustainable system of visionless motion.

The Nigeria State murdered Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola; several high-ranking Nigerians are aware of this fact. His death was too convenient; the subsequent "power shift" arrangement that produced Obasanjo and allowed for clear rules to be bent in qualifying the Alliance for Democracy for registration, suggest that



the *Afenifere* leadership always knew this fact, or, at least, suspected it, and used it as a tool for ensuring the reputation of their party. There are several accomplices after the fact of Abiola's murder. The way Obasanjo routed them in 2003 and the negotiations into which they were manoeuvred before his ambush, suggests a level of accommodation for the evil endemic in the system.

Let the hagiographers begin their enterprise, and I am happy to engage those interested in revisionism. Let the battles of polemics be fought and let the wars of ideas begin. All these I am happy to fight.

The Nigeria State or its system has killed better men and women than myself, and I am fully aware of its murderous capacities. But I ask one thing of you, if they come for me, and it pleases God to yield my life to them, Bury Me Like A Hero. Just as I still listen to the immortal songs of Olufela Anikulapo-Kuti, read my words, preach its messages, let us together rebuild Nigeria.

Bury Me Like A Hero.



INDEX

2nd Republic, **18**
3rd Term, **20**
Abacha, **73, 74, 75, 92, 94, 132, 154, 176, 221**
Abadina, **27**
Abdulai, **88**
Abdusallam, **15, 50**
Abiodun Faleke, **22**
Abiola, **92, 148, 153, 176** Abuja, **54, 55, 99, 120**
Achebe, **75**
Action Congress (AC), **13**
Action Group (AG), **21, 90**
AD, **18, 90, 91**
Adams, **16, 95, 96**
Ademola Adeniji-Adele, **18**
Adesanya, **18** Afenifere, **18, 90**
affiliations, **150, 155, 174** AG, **21, 90** agricultural, **24, 184**
Ahmadu Bello, **20, 23**
Aisha, **22**
Akintola, **19, 21, 23, 24**
Akpabio, **60**
Alamieyeseigha, **60, 61, 62, 98** Ali, **50, 98, 124, 151, 152, 153, 171** alliance, **21, 92, 94**
Alliance for Democracy, AD, **18** alliances, **20, 92, 104, 219** allocation, **20, 42, 216**
Amaechi, **77** amalgamation, **78**
ambassadors, **168**
America, **27, 46, 79, 140, 169, 188**
Andoakaa, **76** Angas, **20, 95** ANPP, **43, 90** anti-grazing, **44, 139** apartheid, **125**
APC, **14, 16, 17, 37, 38, 50, 77, 81, 82, 104, 114, 126, 127, 132, 136, 157, 158, 171, 193, 219, 220, 223**
applicants, **35** appropriation, **13, 128**
Aremu, **9, 126, 172, 177, 188, 189, 190, 191, 218**
Aremu', **190, 191**
Arewa, **88**



Army, **23, 122, 123**
 Arts, **28**
 Aso Rock, **22, 57, 76, 98, 137, 138, 149**
 Assembly, **46, 60, 223**
 Atiku, **14, 82, 83, 94, 100, 149**
 Awoists, **18, 19**
 Awolowo, **17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 34, 45, 81, 82, 90, 91, 177** Babachir, **50, 68**
 Babangida, **18, 29, 50, 71, 74, 123, 152, 220**
 Bafarawa, **60**
 Beko Ransome-Kuti, **28**
 Benue, **23, 51, 104, 121, 136, 139, 155** Biafran, **96**
 black, **56, 57, 192, 207, 224** Boko Haram,
43, 99
 Bola Ahmed Tinubu, **13, 38, 45, 59, 70, 77, 81, 82, 91, 99, 100, 101, 114,**
126, 127, 181, 219 bomb
 blasts, **54** bombing, **54, 55,**
152 Borno, **43** bribe, **187**
 British, **20, 56, 59, 61, 117, 122, 151** broom,
192, 193 brooms, **191, 192, 193** brown
 envelope, **85**
 Buhari, **8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 38, 44, 50, 51, 58, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78,**
82, 93, 94, 97, 98, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 116, 118, 121, 126, 127, 136, 139, 149, 151, 152, 154,
155, 157, 170, 173, 177,
178, 181, 218 bunkerers, **43** Buratai, **102** cabal, **22, 23** campaign, **19, 77, 78, 82, 138** candidacy,
37, 83, 149 capitalist, **221** censorship, **85, 101** census, **20, 73** centralized, **34** certificate, **60, 116,**
157 chairman, **22, 76, 138** change, **28, 35, 39, 82, 92, 93, 94, 101, 135, 136, 148, 149, 157, 170, 172,**
173, 174, 183, 207, 216, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223 checkpoints,
55, 121 Chevron, **114**
 Chief Ganiyu Dawodu, **19**
 Chief John Oyegun, **22**
 China, **208**
 Christians, **41, 118**
 Chukwumerije, **154, 176** church, **48, 113, 114** Ciroma, **137, 138, 139** citizen, **36, 45, 48, 61, 80,**
89, 116, 119, 121, 125, 126, 134, 150, 175 citizens, **13, 17, 28, 37, 48, 51, 55, 56, 62, 69, 76, 79, 80,**
87, 95, 96, 100, 102, 113, 116, 121, 125, 128, 134, 148, 149, 150, 152, 168, 174, 191, 219,
223
 citizenship **14, 45, 80, 96, 116, 118, 119, 121, 122, 125, 126, 127, 128,**
148, 155, 175, 219 civil, **20, 21, 26, 55, 73, 74, 123, 157,**
168, 193 civil war, **20, 21, 123** Clark, **59, 98**
 coalition, **14, 15, 37, 38, 82, 132, 172** Code of Conduct
 Tribunal, **22, 60** cohesion and unity, **174** colleges, **85**
 colonial, **20, 117, 150** commander-in-chief, **181**
 commissioners, **71, 72, 150** commonwealth, **71, 72, 75,**
76, 91, 127, 131 complicity, **92, 104, 105, 113, 114, 172**
 Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, **16**



Conference Centre, **27** Conflicts, **7, 42** conscience, **4, 26, 29, 48, 67, 135, 140, 218, 221, 222**
constitution, **20, 34, 46, 47, 48, 116, 219** constitutions, **20** contemporary, **1, 21** cooperative, **24**
corruption, **15, 16, 18, 25, 67, 68, 70, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 82, 97, 99,**
100, 101, 102, 104, 118, 120, 121, 149, 175, 177, 178, 206, 221, 222 Councillor, **169** country, **14,**
17, 20, 23, 28, 30, 43, 48, 53, 56, 57, 59, 72, 79, 88, 91, 93, 94, 97, 101, 102, 104, 122, 126, 148, 153,
154, 157, 170, 174, 183, 218, 219,
221, 223, 226 coup, **22, 34, 73, 89, 123, 124, 138, 215**
coups, **89** CPC, **132, 171** crimes, **50, 58, 88, 120, 177,**
178 criminal, **15, 20, 48, 50, 172, 173, 178, 219** crusade,
60, 68, 72, 76, 77



crusades, **72 101**
 cult, **81, 82**
 CUPP, **82**
 Danjuma, **15, 20, 23, 122, 123, 124** Dasuki,
50 defence, **44**
 Delta, **37, 48, 61, 98, 119, 128**
 democratization, **37** Diaspora, **221**
 dictatorship, **132** Diezani, **57, 58, 68**
 diligence, **39** diversity, **21, 175** do
 not die, **25, 223** doctor, **53, 169, 170**
 drums, **208**
 Dubai, **59, 79, 102, 207**
 Eagle Square, **90**
 Eagles, **9, 56, 174, 175, 176**
 East, **34, 82, 89**
 Eastern, **34, 122**
Ebora of Owu, **18, 98, 99, 148, 172, 178, 189**
 ECONET, **59**
 economy, **74, 86, 120**
 education, **17, 24, 27, 28, 53, 78, 83, 84, 157, 224, 225** EFCC, **50, 60, 68, 75, 76,**
169
 Egbin, **37**
 Ekiti, **17, 24, 62, 134, 137, 156** El Zaky-zaky, **50** election, **22, 23, 24, 25, 38, 78, 93, 98, 154,**
176, 193, 219, 221, 222, 223 elections, **17, 23, 38, 60, 73, 91, 98, 100, 134, 171, 218, 219, 220,**
223 electorate, **24** empire, **20, 23, 101**
 empires, **20 154** enslavement, **114, 117, 148** environment, **27, 29, 35, 45, 55, 78, 84, 86, 120, 121,**
137, 140, 184, 185,
225
 equalization, **118, 119, 126** ethnic, **16, 17, 21, 23, 119, 121, 122, 124, 127, 132, 174** ethnicity, **16,**
24, 116, 119, 120, 155, 175 existential, **29, 30, 49, 75, 80, 86, 87, 89, 92, 95, 96, 100, 133, 134, 148,**
156, 158, 168, 221, 222, 225
 extradition, **58, 68** faculty, **179, 181**
 Fai, **43**
 faith, **18, 73, 79, 94**
 Falae, **91** farmers, **24,**
104 farming, **85**
 Fashola, **60, 77, 100, 220** Fayose, **60, 61, 62, 88** federal, **13,**
20, 21, 34, 73, 76, 78, 119, 215, 216 federal government, **13,**
216 federalism, **34**
 Fela Anikulapo, **29, 135**
 FEUDALISM, **83**
 feudalistic, **18, 20, 21, 28** Fiditi, **27, 84,**
183, 184 First Republic, **20, 90, 215**



followers, **16, 61, 185** football, **56, 174, 175, 176, 209** foreigners, **41** formula, **20** foundations, **21, 89, 188** fraud, **34**
Fuel Subsidy, **13**
Fulani, **21, 23, 44, 54, 77, 88, 117, 118, 121, 122, 123, 124, 127**
Fulfulde, **16** fundamentalism, **17**
Gani Fawehinmi, **28, 29**
GEJ, **15, 102, 103, 149, 177, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223** Generals, **48**
genocidal, **23, 123** genocide, **56, 155** gladiators, **208**
Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, **14, 29, 58, 59, 70, 93, 97, 98, 99, 100, 177, 218** government, **13, 15, 21, 22, 24, 27, 28, 35, 39, 44, 53, 58, 59, 61, 62, 68, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 83, 84, 86, 90, 94, 97, 99, 102, 104, 105, 113, 126, 127, 136, 139, 140, 149, 150, 151, 154, 158, 168, 170, 173, 215, 216, 218, 219, 220, 222**
Governors, **35, 123, 223** Gowon, **20, 34, 73, 123, 124** grievances, **21, 39, 40, 41, 42** groups, **20, 34, 85, 119, 122, 124, 215** guards, **80**
gubernatorial, **22, 24, 25, 76, 134**
Gwaris, **96**
Hausa, **16, 21, 29, 41, 123, 124, 127** Hausa-Fulani, **16, 21** healthcare, **53, 61, 79, 80, 158** herdsmen, **23, 54, 88, 104, 121, 139** Herdsmen, **44** heroes, **25, 152**
Hilltop, **190** historical, **21, 34, 119** history, **18, 73, 76, 84, 93, 98, 117, 122, 147, 177, 179, 219, 223** hospitals, **53, 74, 79, 131, 207**
Ibadan, **26, 27, 83, 84, 91, 104, 122, 184, 185, 186, 187, 191, 192, 207, 209** IBB, **14, 15, 153, 154, 221**
Ibori, **59, 60, 61, 70**
ICPC, **75**



identities, **118, 119** Idiagbon, **73, 74**
 Igbo, **20, 29, 34, 41, 88, 117, 118, 119, 123, 127, 152, 155**
 Igbos, **88, 96**
 Ige, **18, 21, 81, 91, 94, 132, 178**
 Ignorance, **8, 83**
 IITA, **9, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188** illiteracy, **24**
 immigrant, **224, 225** immunity, **72, 78, 102** impunity,
28, 44, 68, 72, 120 Inalende, **26, 27, 83, 191, 208, 209,**
210 independence, **34, 118** independent candidacy,
37 industrialization, **24** industries, **18, 24**
 INEC, **38, 219** Inequality, **7, 42** information, **88, 114,**
119, 131, 206 infrastructure, **62** injunction, **56, 181**
 injustice, **13, 40, 42, 68** institutions, **50, 139, 140, 187**
 Insurgencies, **7, 42** intelligence, **98, 99** interests, **14,**
20, 88, 94, 128, 150, 152, 175 investments, **15** Ironsi,
20, 122, 124
 Islamic, **20, 117**
Jagaban, **15, 16, 18, 23, 89, 96, 99, 149, 157, 181, 193**
 Jang, **60**
 Jimi Agbaje, **38, 218**
 Jonathan, **14, 50, 59, 60, 61, 76, 77, 78, 93, 94, 98, 99, 172, 177, 218** JTF, **126** judge, **169, 181**
 judgment, **67, 79, 88, 177** judiciary, **22, 25, 67, 68, 222** Jukuns, **20, 95**
 June 12, **9, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 176, 223** jungle, **47, 157, 185,**
189
 justice, **42, 50, 57, 59, 60, 67, 113, 114, 169** Kaduna, **29, 37, 88, 95,**
151, 155
 Kaduna Nzeogwu, **29**
 Kanem Bornu, **20** Kanu, **89, 96**
 Kanuri, **16**
 Katafs, **95**
 Kemi Adeosun, **39, 60** Ken Saro-
 Wiwa, **43** keyboard warriors, **221**
 kidnap, **209** killers, **105, 123, 154**
 Knowledge, **9, 18, 156, 185**
 Kogi, **22, 25, 51, 119, 120, 193**
 Kwankwaso, **82**
 labor, **14, 53, 93, 225**
 Ladoke Akintola, **21**
 Lagos State, **13, 28, 38, 55, 79, 81, 100, 104, 126, 127, 131, 132, 179, 184, 220**
 Lam Adesina, **104**
 Lamido, **60, 220**
 LASU, **28, 55, 179, 180, 184**
 law, **15, 25, 49, 50, 51, 88, 140, 177, 179, 180** LCDAs, **126, 127**



leaders, **19, 20, 21, 46, 51, 71, 74, 81, 90, 122, 185, 188, 207** leadership, **17, 18, 19, 36, 44, 45, 46, 73, 81, 90, 91, 96, 132, 136, 148, 153, 171, 206, 207, 218, 222**
 legislative, **20, 75, 122, 150** legislator,
169 legislators, **71, 72, 76, 136, 222**
 Lekki-Epe Expressway, **13**
 Library, **188, 207**
 Local Governments, **35**
 Lugard, **20, 177** Maina, **50**
 majority, **28, 48, 83, 96, 134, 172, 173, 174, 225**
 Mambilla, **23**
 Martin Luther King Jr., **114** martyrs, **25, 67** massacre, **123, 137**
 media, **50, 81, 85, 171, 173, 206, 221** membership, **85, 116, 118, 122, 123, 125, 128, 150** memorial, **150** middle belt, **17, 20, 23**
 middle class, **78, 79, 80, 87, 89, 133, 134, 156, 158, 219, 222** Midwest, **34, 215**
 Mikel, **57** militancy, **43** militants, **42, 43, 44** military, **15, 17, 30, 34, 70, 73, 94, 102, 123, 124, 186, 215** minister, **42, 44, 50, 55, 57, 58, 60, 124, 133, 139, 181** Minister, **39, 104, 114, 139** ministers, **15, 71, 124** minorities, **17, 20, 23, 34, 96, 117, 118** minority, **20, 34, 76, 117, 122, 124, 136, 206, 215** Miye i Allah, **138**
 MKO, **92, 153, 155, 223** Mosque,
114 motherland, **95, 221** Murtala,
60, 72, 73, 124 Muslim, **16, 56, 119, 127, 151, 176** myth, **16, 20, 42, 118, 123, 124, 136**
 NADECO, **18, 82**
 nation, **36, 37, 51, 57, 73, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80, 87, 90, 95, 96, 98, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 128, 133, 149, 153, 154, 155, 156, 175, 176, 185, 189, 218, 219, 220, 221, 223** national
 chairman, **16** nationalities, **117**
 nationality, **14, 116, 119** Nationhood,
7, 9, 36, 153
 NDA, **36**
 NEPA, **69** Nepotism, **46**
 news, **17, 54, 55, 56, 85, 137, 138, 184, 206** Niger Delta, **37, 42, 51, 98, 216**
 Nigeria, **1, 3, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 69, 71, 72, 76, 77, 80, 81, 82, 83, 86, 88, 90, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 102, 105, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 127, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 140, 148, 150, 152, 153, 154, 155, 157, 158, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 182, 183, 184, 185, 188, 189, 191, 193, 206, 207, 215, 216, 219, 220, 225** Nigeria Civil War, **21**
 Nigerian, **20**
 Nigerian Defence Academy, **181**
 Nigerian judiciary, **15**



Nigerian press, **15, 17, 18, 82, 100, 104, 114, 221**
 Nigerian State, **7, 14, 20, 29, 30, 42, 43, 49, 50, 51, 59, 69, 70, 89, 95, 98,**
100, 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 126, 140, 154, 155, 175, 176, 177, 193, 215 NNPC, 42, 58
 North, **8, 20, 23, 34, 41, 42, 73, 82, 89, 95, 96, 117, 118, 119, 122, 123, 124,**
136
 northern, **16, 17, 20, 21, 23, 73, 76, 88**
 Northern, **20, 41, 83, 95, 96, 117, 118, 122, 123, 124, 125, 152**
 NPC, **20, 21, 23**
 N-PDP, **15**
 NPN, **18**
 Nyako, **60**
 Nyame, **60**
 NYSC, **39**
 Obasanjo, **9, 14, 15, 18, 20, 22, 29, 37, 38, 45, 46, 50, 59, 60, 71, 72, 73, 75,**
76, 77, 81, 92, 93, 94, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 124, 126, 136, 137, 152, 154,
168, 176, 177, 178, 185, 188, 189, 190, 191, 207, 220 OBJ, 149, 219, 220,
221
 Officer, **35, 105, 123, 124, 169, 187**
 Ogoni, **43**
 Oil States, **34** oligarchs, **15**
 Omoyele Sowore, **39**
 Ondo, **22, 100**
 Onnoghen, **22, 25, 67, 68**
 Oodua', **89** OPC, **54**
 oppositions, **37**
 oppression, **113, 152**
 oppressive, **17, 83**
 Origin, **119**
 Ortom, **136**
 Osinbajo, **180**
 Osun, **17, 25, 116, 118, 125, 157, 193** Owu, **98, 148, 151, 154, 173, 177, 218**
 parliament, **21** parliamentary, **215, 216** parties, **13, 38, 93, 132, 222** party,
16, 22, 38, 90, 102, 128, 132, 135, 182, 192, 209, 221 passport, **35**
 patriotism, **119, 125, 126**
 PDP, **13, 15, 17, 38, 50, 76, 77, 78, 91, 127, 131, 132, 158, 171, 193, 219, 221, 223**
 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), **13** Peter Odili,
43 petroleum, **42, 50, 58**
 Plateau, **37, 51, 56, 57, 60, 104, 121, 137, 138** PMB, **101, 103** policies, **86, 90, 101, 216, 220** political
 governance, **14** politicians, **20, 59, 73, 78, 89, 95, 102, 169** politics, **3, 16, 17, 19, 55, 91, 125, 151,**
177, 181 population, **20, 42, 79, 126, 175, 226** poverty, **24, 29, 79, 83, 85, 86, 87, 89, 97, 99, 131,**
133, 135, 136, 148, 157, 188, 190, 191 Poverty, **8, 83, 86, 87** power, **14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25,**
28, 29, 37, 44, 50, 57, 58, 60, 61, 69, 75, 76, 83, 92, 93, 94, 98, 99, 100, 101, 104, 117, 121, 126, 138,
140, 149,



151, 168, 172, 193, 215 presidency, **14, 22, 38, 97, 98, 149, 219, 221**
 presidential, **38, 39, 44, 58, 91, 104, 168, 189, 190, 218, 223** presidential
 library, **189, 190**
 press, **14, 17, 82, 85, 93, 94, 104, 114, 131, 206, 222** Prime
 Ministership, **21** principalities, **87, 168, 169, 170, 189**
 privatization, **131** profession, **94, 180**
 Professor, **29, 50, 88, 180, 181** progressive, **17, 23, 78, 91, 93, 101, 131**
 promotion, **42, 48, 51, 124, 126** propaganda, **76, 81, 82, 93, 104, 131,**
177, 184, 220 quota, **119, 125, 126** realities, **14, 15, 20, 35, 74, 100, 131,**
158, 168, 169, 225 recommendation, **215, 216**
 regime, **20, 25, 72, 73, 74, 76, 77, 92, 93, 132, 218, 219** Region, **20, 34, 215**
 regions, **20, 34, 48, 98, 215, 216** religious, **16, 17, 21, 113, 127, 150, 155, 156, 174,**
175, 192, 225 removal of subsidies, **13** repatriation, **58** resources, **42, 207**
 restructuring, **34, 127, 147, 149, 150, 216** revenue, **20, 216**
 revolution, **92, 93, 94, 170, 222** Ribadu, **75, 76, 220**
 rights, **3, 47, 48, 88, 118, 119, 122, 125, 128, 139, 150, 191, 219, 223**
 River Niger, **20**
 Rivers, **34, 119**
 roadblocks, **120**
 roads, **24, 29, 80, 121, 131, 185, 220**
 Rufai, **88**
 Rule of Law, **7, 49, 76, 140** ruler, **25,**
113
 ruling class, **21, 101, 102, 127** S. M.
 Afolabi, **75**
 Sabon Gari, **41**
 Sagay, **50** salaries,
120
 Saraki, **14, 15, 22, 102, 168**
 Sardauna, **20, 124**
 Sardauna of Sokoto, **20, 124**
 schools, **18, 27, 53, 67, 79, 80, 84, 85, 127, 131, 157, 158, 208**
 Sciences, **28** Second Republic, **73**
 second term, **24, 51, 76, 98**
 security, **23, 51, 54, 73, 80, 105, 158, 186, 187, 192** Security
 Service, **39** senate, **22, 68** Senate, **39, 222**
 Senator, **22** servant, **26, 58, 157** Shagari, **72, 73** Sherif, **43** shithole', **172** society, **26, 28, 35, 36, 39,**
42, 47, 67, 78, 86, 89, 92, 134, 135, 152, 170, 173, 174, 185, 206, 222
 Sokoto Caliphate, **20, 117** soldiers, **28, 55, 77,**
89, 151, 154 songs, **208, 209**
 South, **20, 23, 82, 96, 100, 117, 118, 125** southern,
20, 73 southerners, **73, 88** Southwest, **14, 23**
 sovereign guarantees, **13** spiritualization, **168,**
169
 State, **13, 16, 18, 20, 28, 30, 34, 36, 39, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 56, 60, 61,**



69, 80, 88, 89, 100, 103, 104, 116, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 131, 137, 139, 140, 148, 153, 154, 155, 158, 172, 173, 175, 177, 178, 182, 189, 206, 215, 218, 223 statesman,
88, 152 statesmen, **50**
 Stomach infrastructure, **86**
 structure, **34, 46, 89, 150, 188, 215, 216** Student
 Union Congress, **70** subjectivization, **81**
 succession, **22, 92** sufferings, **26**
 Supreme Court, **67** survivalists, **29** system, **3, 14, 15, 17, 27, 28, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 53, 57, 58, 59, 60, 68, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 79, 81, 82, 83, 85, 86, 92, 93, 94, 97, 99, 100, 102, 103, 113, 114, 119, 125, 126, 131, 136, 137, 148, 149, 150, 153, 154, 156, 158, 172, 173, 180, 182, 215, 216, 218, 222, 223, 225** system of government, **216** systems, **14, 136**
 Tafawa Balewa, **21**
 Tai Solarin, **28** Tambuwal, **82**
 teachers, **84, 85, 134** team, **56, 174, 175** territories, **34, 104, 223** terrorist, **44, 139, 151, 223** The
 Guardian, **14** Theatre, **207** thieves, **29, 50, 78, 83, 91, 93, 94, 98, 101, 102, 131, 132, 136, 153, 172, 188, 192**
 Tinubu, **14, 15, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 45, 68, 81, 82, 86, 91, 93, 94, 99, 100, 101, 102, 104, 114, 126, 127, 136, 168, 220** Tiv, **21, 117, 118** tolling, **13** trade, **17, 24, 179, 224, 225** traditions, **209**
 Tramadol, **225** transmission, **37** tribe, **24, 29, 92, 116, 119, 120** tribes, **87, 117, 148** Trump, **46, 140**
 truth, **4, 15, 17, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 44, 51, 81, 82, 89, 92, 96, 99, 122, 125, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 149, 152, 154, 155, 156, 158, 168, 177, 181, 192, 206, 222**
 TV station, **24**
 Uncle Bola, **18** UNILAG, **180**
 unitary, **34, 215**
 university, **28, 70, 71, 125, 179**
 University of Ibadan, **27**
 UPN, **90**
 ventriloquists, **87, 88, 89, 96** violence, **18, 36, 40, 41, 42, 44, 121, 223** vision, **29, 36, 37, 39, 46, 47, 48, 94, 153, 155, 158, 183, 185, 188, 206, 207, 225**
 Votes, **24, 157**
 Wahab Dosumu, **18**
 waterworks, **80**
 wealth, **19, 29, 39, 72, 78, 79, 85, 86, 98, 99, 128, 219** weaponization, **85**
 weaponized, **23, 24, 86, 87, 89, 135, 136, 137, 157, 188, 206** West, **21, 24, 82, 83, 100, 184** western, **24, 90, 206, 221**
 Western, **34, 122, 151, 215** Wey, **124**
 Willink Commission, **34** Wole
 Soyinka, **29**
 writing, **13, 47, 103, 172, 188** Yar
 A'dua, **219**
 Yar'Adua, **76, 97**



*Yoruba, 17, 18, 21, 23, 29, 37, 41, 59, 81, 90, 91, 95, 99, 117, 118, 119, 127,
138, 152, 155, 176, 182, 192, 193, 209, 218, 220 Yorubaland, 19, 23 youth, 27, 29, 157,
176, 184, 186, 189, 190, 192, 193, 223, 224, 225, 226*



